



## Reasons Why Youth Should Avoid Marijuana

Now that marijuana (cannabis, weed, pot, grass, ganja) is legal for adults over 21 to use in California, it is important to know the facts and stay informed. Some people believe marijuana cannot be harmful because it is "natural." But not all plants are good, for example, tobacco and poison ivy are both harmful plants. To help you make an informed choice, see the [Let's Talk Cannabis Youth Fact Sheet](#). Listed below are ways marijuana use can affect you.

### Affects Your Brain

- **Marijuana affects a developing brain, altering memory, judgment and motor skills.**
- **The fact:** Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in marijuana, affects the nerve cells in the part of the brain where memories are formed.
- **Consequences:** Research shows that when you use cannabis your memory, learning, and attention are harmed. Some studies suggest a permanent impact as well.<sup>1</sup>
- **How to say no:** *I'm good — I need to keep my mind clear.*

### School and College

- **Using cannabis can harm your memory, learning, and attention.**
- **The facts:** Brain development is not complete until your mid-20s. Using cannabis while your brain is still growing can make it harder to think or solve problems.<sup>2</sup> You might also be more likely to skip classes, get lower grades, and drop out of school.<sup>3,4</sup>
- **Consequences:** Youth found in possession of marijuana will face drug education and community service requirements — and a possible suspension of their driver's license.

- **How to say no:** *I'm good— I need my head clear.*



### Sports and Activities

- **Using cannabis affects timing, movement, and coordination, which can harm your athletic performance.**
- **The facts:** The smoke from cannabis has many of the same toxins and chemicals found in cigarette smoke such as tar, ammonia, and hydrogen cyanide. When inhaled, they can increase your risk of developing lung problems.<sup>5,6,7</sup>
- **Consequences:** If you're caught using cannabis, you can be kicked off sports teams and other after school activities. You can also be suspended or expelled from school and/or referred to drug counseling.
- **How to say no:** *Not for me, I've got to keep my lungs clear to stay on top of my game.*



## Social Life

- **Look around you. Not everyone is using weed.**
- **The facts:** In 2016, most high school students in California reported they were not using cannabis. About 15 percent (less than 1 in 5) reported using cannabis in the past 30 days.<sup>8</sup>
- **Consequences:**
  - Getting caught with cannabis may mean getting charged with a Minor in Possession (MIP), which can involve fines, public service hours, misdemeanor/felony charges, and even possible loss of driver's license.
  - You can also lose your parents' trust, resulting in the loss of privileges.
- **How to say no:** *No thanks, weed's not my thing.*

## Be a Real Friend

- **How can you tell if a friend is using cannabis?** Sometimes it's tough to tell. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be using marijuana<sup>9</sup>:
  - Seeming dizzy and having trouble walking.
  - Having red, bloodshot eyes.
  - Smelly hair and clothes.
  - Having a hard time remembering things that just happened.
  - Acting silly for no apparent reason.
- **Be a real friend.** Encourage your friend to seek professional help. Call the SAMHSA's National Helpline at **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** anytime.



<sup>1</sup>Broyd, S. J., H. H. van Hell, C. Beale, M. Yucel, and N. Solowij. 2016. "Acute and Chronic Effects of Cannabinoids on Human Cognition-A Systematic Review." *Biol Psychiatry* 79 (7):557-67. doi: 10.1016/j.bio-psych.2015.12.002.

<sup>2</sup>Batalla, A., S. Bhattacharyya, M. Yucel, P. Fusar-Poli, J. A. Crippa, S. Nogue, M. Torrens, J. Pujol, M. Farre, and R. Martin-Santos. 2013. "Structural and functional imaging studies in chronic cannabis users: a systematic review of adolescent and adult findings." *PLoS One* 8 (2):e55821. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0055821.

<sup>3</sup>Arria, A. M., L. M. Garnier-Dykstra, E. T. Cook, K. M. Caldeira, K. B. Vincent, R. A. Baron, and K. E. O'Grady. 2013. "Drug use patterns in young adulthood and post-college employment." *Drug Alcohol Depend* 127 (1-3):23-30. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2012.06.001.

<sup>4</sup>Fergusson, D. M., and J. M. Boden. 2008. "Cannabis use and later life outcomes." *Addiction* 103 (6):969-76; discussion 977-8. doi: 10.1111/j.1360 0443.2008.02221.x

<sup>5</sup>Moir, D., W. S. Rickert, G. Levasseur, Y. Larose, R. Maertens, P. White, and S. Desjardins. 2008. "A comparison of mainstream and sidestream marijuana and tobacco cigarette smoke produced under two machine smoking conditions." *Chem Res Toxicol* 21 (2):494-502. doi: 10.1021/tx700275p.

<sup>6</sup>Tashkin, D. P. 2013. "Effects of marijuana smoking on the lung." *Ann Am Thorac Soc* 10 (3):239-47. doi: 10.1513/AnnalsATS.201212-127FR.

<sup>7</sup>Wilson, K. M. (2016). Secondhand Marijuana Smoke Is Not Benign. *Journal of the American Heart Association: Cardiovascular and Cerebrovascular Disease*, 5(8), e004004. <http://doi.org/10.1161/JAHA.116.004004>

<sup>8</sup>California Department of Public Health, Tobacco Control Program. 2016. "2016 California Student Tobacco Survey."

<sup>9</sup>Adapted from the SAMHSA's Health Information Network. *Tips for Teens: Marijuana*.