



Facts for Teens about Marijuana

CONTRARY TO COMMON BELIEFS ON THE STREET, MARIJUANA IS NOT A HARMLESS DRUG. HERE'S WHY....

MYTH: You can't become addicted to marijuana.

REALITY: 9% of those who try marijuana become cannabis dependent, and overall, 5% of Americans are dependent on marijuana.

MYTH: Smoking pot is a normal part of adolescence

REALITY: Your lifetime risk of dependence on marijuana rises from 9% to 17% if you start using as a teen. The earlier you start using marijuana, the higher the likelihood you will go on to try heroin and cocaine.

MYTH: Marijuana is harmless

REALITY: Teens who started smoking between ages 14-22 but stopped by 22 had more cognitive problems at age 27 than adults who started smoking as adults. A teen that starts smoking before age 17 has more problems with memory, verbal fluency, learning, and executive functioning than those who never smoked, or who started smoking later on in life.

MYTH: It is safe to drive while high on marijuana

REALITY: MRI tests on the brains of marijuana smokers immediately after smoking showed decreases in attention, psychomotor skills and changes in the brain areas involved in thinking, indicating that driving while high is unsafe. (Battistella et al, 2013). The risk of car accidents increases due to an impairment in reaction time, coordination, performance, attention, information processing, tracking behavior, and a diminished response to emergency situations. In fact, 2-5% of fatal accidents involve marijuana without any drinking.

Some research shows a higher risk of Early Onset Schizophrenia among marijuana users:

- ◆ Marijuana use was associated with double or triple the risk of schizophrenia in a study of young Swedish men
- ◆ The researchers estimated that 13% of cases of schizophrenia might have been avoided, if marijuana had never been used (Andreasson S et al. Lancet, 1987; Zammit S et al. BMJ, 2002)

Other issues with marijuana:

- ◆ Anxiety and panic, especially in naïve users
- ◆ Cannabis dependence syndrome (1 in 10 users)
- ◆ Impaired educational attainment in teens who are regular users and decrease in IQ (Meier et al. 2012)
- ◆ Psychotic symptoms and disorders in heavy users and those with family history of these disorders
- ◆ Compromised immune system, chronic bronchitis and impaired respiratory function in regular smokers (Hall & Degenhardt, Lancet 2009)

SO BE INFORMED, AND MAKE A GOOD AND HEALTHY CHOICE.