

Here's what you can say about marijuana use and youth...

Kids do risky things because they're kids, but if they're high, then the risk gets even greater.

Regular use of marijuana is robbing our youth of their IQ points, memory and in some cases, their mental health.

Adolescents crave fun because the pleasure seeking side of their brain is up and running by puberty. But the downside is that their brains can't always recognize danger, throwing off their checks and balances system.



Legalizing marijuana for any purpose has youth thinking that using marijuana is "no big deal." But just remember that legal doesn't equal safe.

If kids start using marijuana at a young age, they could face serious addiction issues later in life.

If teens think using marijuana is "no big deal" then they should ask themselves why are more of their peers in drug treatment for marijuana use than any other drug.

Each year, thousands of teens are admitted to emergency rooms because of pot. If even 1,000 young people went to emergency rooms for any legal drug, lawmakers and parents would probably demand that the government remove it from the market. Yet pot is being promoted as "safe."

Here is the supporting research and data...

- Signs that a youth may be using marijuana are apathy, disrespect, disinterest in activities, lower grades, frequent mood changes, depression, and isolation from the family.ⁱ
- Teens who use marijuana are more likely than non-users to engage in delinquent and dangerous behavior.ⁱⁱ
- In 2007, 68% of youth in treatment nationally were there for marijuana use.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2009, 830,000 youth displayed characteristics of marijuana addiction.^{iv}
- Young people using marijuana frequently experience an increased risk of schizophrenia and greater levels of depression including being three times more likely to have suicidal thoughts.^v
- Marijuana-using teens are more likely to have multiple sexual partners and engage in unsafe sex.^{vi}
- Marijuana use has been shown to permanently impair brain development in youth.^{vii} Learning skills such as problem solving, concentration, motivation and memory are negatively affected.
- The number of teenage and adult users would increase if marijuana was legalized.^{viii} The number would double and most likely triple. There are 16.7 million regular marijuana users.^{ix} The increase would mean an additional 17 to 34 million users in the United States.
- Teens' perceptions of the harmfulness of marijuana are down, which could lead to increased use of the drug. According to the Monitoring the Future Survey, only 41% of eighth graders see occasional use of marijuana as harmful; 66.9% see regular use as harmful. Both rates are at the lowest since the survey began tracking risk perception for this age group in 1991. Only 20.6% of 12th graders see occasional use as harmful (lowest since 1983), and 44.1 % see regular use as harmful, the lowest since 1979.^x
- A recent study shows that persistent use of cannabis from childhood to adulthood was associated with neuropsychological decline presenting as an average 8-point IQ decline.^{xi}

- Marijuana use that begins in adolescence increases the risk of addiction from about 1 in 11 overall to about 1 in 6 for those who start using in their teens.^{xii}
- There are over 45,000 young people between ages 15 -17 admitted to emergency rooms each year because of pot.^{xiii}

What other state's have experienced...

Colorado, where marijuana is legal both as a so-called medicine and "recreationally," currently has the nation's third highest rate of marijuana use among youth ages 12 - 17.5.^{xiv}

Thurstone, et al. (2011) interviewed 80 adolescents (15 through 19 years of age) undergoing out-patient substance abuse treatment in Denver. Thirty-nine of the 80 reported having obtained marijuana from someone with a medical marijuana license.

In Colorado, a survey of more than 27,000 students through the Adams County Youth Initiative found a jump in use. In 2008, 19 percent of students in various Adams County middle and high schools said they had used marijuana in the last month. That number increased to 22 percent in 2009 and 30 percent in 2010.



A major study published in Drug and Alcohol Dependence by researchers at Columbia University looked at two separate datasets and found that residents of states with medical marijuana had marijuana abuse/dependence rates almost twice as high as states without such laws.

Here are some places you can obtain local statistics on marijuana use among youth:

- Utilize local treatment facilities intake assessment data
- District Medical examiner's toxicology reports
- Statewide Substance Abuse Surveys
- Health Departments and Statewide Health agencies

ⁱONDCP's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. Parents the Anti-Drug. Marijuana Facts

ⁱⁱDEA, "DEA Position on Marijuana", July 2010

ⁱⁱⁱSAMHSA, "Highlights for the 2007 Treatment Episode Data Set"

^{iv}SAMHSA, "2009 National Survey of Drug Use and Health", September 2010

^vFlorida Department of Children and Families. 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS)

^{vi}Bovassco, G., American Journal of Psychiatry, 2001

^{vii}Dr. Christian Thurstone, M.D., Director, Denver Health - Substance Abuse, Treatment, Education and Prevention Program

^{viii}DEA, "Speaking Out Against Drug Legalization" 2010

^{ix}SAMHSA, "2009 National Survey of Drug Use and Health", September 2010

^xJohnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2012). Monitoring the Future national results on adolescent drug use: Overview of key findings, 2011. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.

^{xi}Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife. Meier MH, Caspi A, Ambler A, Harrington H, Houts R, Keefe RS, McDonald K, Ward A, Poulton R, Moffitt TE. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2012 Oct 2;109(40):E2657-64. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1206820109. Epub 2012 Aug 27.

^{xii}Volkow, N. "Regular marijuana use by teens continues to be a concern". National Institute on Drug Addiction (NIDA). December 19, 2012. Web. March 8, 2013. <http://www.nih.gov/news/health/dec2012/nida-19.htm>

^{xiii}Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. Drug Abuse Warning Network. Data Spotlight. "Emergency department visits involving marijuana among adolescents aged 15-17: Increase from 2005 to 2010 varied by gender". November 13, 2012. <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/spotlight/Spot099AdolescentMarijuanaUse2012.pdf>

^{xiv}Dr. Christian Thurstone, M.D., Director, Denver Health - Substance Abuse, Treatment, Education and Prevention Program