

TEENS AND MARIJUANA

Common questions. Simple answers.

WHAT IS MARIJUANA?

Marijuana is a mind-altering, psychoactive drug. It is composed of a dry, shredded, green/brown mix of flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves from the cannabis sativa plant. THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main ingredient that produces the psychoactive effect.

HOW ARE TEENS USING MARIJUANA?

- Most often, the plant is smoked by rolling it into a cigarette or putting it into a glass or metal pipe.
- Waxy resins, which are stronger, are smoked or vaporized — this is often referred to as “vaping” or using a “vape pen.” For more information on vaping, see the Delaware Vaping Toolkit at <https://www.healthylouisiana.org/Community-Partners/Toolkits/Vape#intro>.
- THC, the active chemical in marijuana, can be added to food or candy and eaten.

STUDENT USE OF MARIJUANA AND VAPING

Recently, marijuana vaping has skyrocketed among high school students. Teen vaping of marijuana doubled between 2013 and 2020, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

- **35% of 12th graders surveyed by the NIH Monitoring the Future study had used marijuana in the prior year, and nearly 67% of them had vaped marijuana. This is up from just under 10% only three years before.**

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF USING MARIJUANA?

On the brain:

- Learning, attention, and memory problems
- Changed perception of time
- Poor coordination and motor skills
- Anxiety and paranoia
- Difficulty thinking and solving problems

On the body:

- Increased heart rate
- Inflammation of the airways in the lungs
- Lowered blood pressure, causing dizziness
- Long-term physical effects like breathing problems and trouble sleeping

Socially and in school:

- Worsening school performance
- Increased risk of mental health disorders
- Impaired driving



CAN TEENS BECOME *ADDICTED* TO MARIJUANA?

- Yes. This is called a marijuana use disorder. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, approximately one in 11 of those who use marijuana will become addicted. This rate increases to about one in six if marijuana use starts during the teen years, and goes up among daily users.
- This early exposure can make it harder to quit marijuana, even when it is negatively affecting a person's life.
- When people stop using marijuana, they may experience symptoms such as:
 - Grouchiness or mood shifts
 - Sleeplessness
 - Decreased appetite
 - Anxiety
 - Cravings

IS MARIJUANA *LEGAL*?

It's complicated. Many states are now legalizing possession of certain amounts of marijuana for medical or personal use. But one thing is for sure: It is still illegal for teens to have or use marijuana. In Delaware, the use of cannabis for medical purposes is permitted for adult patients with certain serious illnesses. Recreational, or adult-use, cannabis is illegal, though possession of small amounts (less than an ounce) has been decriminalized.

IS MARIJUANA A *GATEWAY* DRUG?

There is conflicting evidence on whether marijuana is a "gateway drug" that can lead to use of more dangerous drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Most people who use marijuana don't go on to use "harder" drugs, but those who do may have a higher risk of addiction, especially if they started using marijuana at a young age. Families, parents, and guardians should still be concerned about teen marijuana use.



NOW I'VE GOT THE FACTS — WHAT'S NEXT?

You can visit talk2kidsaboutdrugs.com for trusted, factual information for families and educators.


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