

Healthy Peabody Collaborative

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Myths and Facts About Marijuana

Do you know the facts about marijuana? Here are some common myths.

MYTH: Marijuana is harmless.

FACT: Marijuana is the most widely used illegal drug among youth today and is more potent than ever. Marijuana use can lead to a host of significant health, social, learning, and behavioral problems at a crucial time in a young person's development. Getting high also impairs judgment, which can lead to risky decision making on issues like sex, criminal activity, or riding with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, teens who use drugs are five times more likely to have sex than teens who do not use drugs. Getting high also contributes to general apathy, irresponsible behavior, and risky choices.

MYTH: You can't get addicted to marijuana.

FACT: Don't be fooled by popular beliefs. Kids can get hooked on pot. Research shows that marijuana use can lead to addiction. Each year, more kids enter treatment with a primary diagnosis of marijuana dependence than for all other illegal drugs combined.

MYTH: There's not much parents can do to stop their kids from "experimenting" with marijuana.

FACT: Most parents are surprised to learn that they are the most powerful influence on their children when it comes to drugs. But, it's true, so this message needs to start with parents. Kids need to hear how risky marijuana use can be. They need to know how damaging it can be to their lives. And they need to begin by listening to someone they trust. By staying involved, knowing what their kids are doing, and setting limits with clear rules and consequences, parents can keep their kids drug-free.

MYTH: There are no long-term consequences to marijuana use.

FACT: Research shows that kids who smoke marijuana engage in risky behavior that can jeopardize their futures, like having sex, getting in trouble with the law, or losing scholarship money. Marijuana can also hurt academic achievement and puts kids at risk for depression and anxiety.

MYTH: Marijuana isn't as popular as other drugs like ecstasy among teens today.

FACT: Kids use marijuana far more than any other illegal drug. Among kids who use drugs, 60 percent use only marijuana.

MYTH: Young kids won't be exposed to marijuana.

FACT: While overall marijuana use has decreased, many children and teens are still using it. According to the annual Monitoring the Future national poll, in the past seven years, the number of eighth graders who had used marijuana decreased from approximately one in five to slightly more than one in 10. With recent research now linking marijuana use to [mental health disorders](#) like depression and schizophrenia, this is still far too many. The same report notes that, by 12th grade, marijuana use increases to more than two in five teens.

MYTH: Parents who experimented with marijuana in their youth would be hypocrites if they told their kids not to try it.

FACT: Parents need to make their own decisions about whether to talk to their children about their own drug use. But parents can tell their kids that much more is known today about the serious health and social consequences of using marijuana.