

TEENS HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT MARIJUANA



INSIDE: Find facts to help start a conversation about marijuana

A Special Advertising Supplement

TEENS WANT TO HEAR IT FROM YOU

What parents and mentors need to know about marijuana

Parents and mentors can have an impact on whether or not youth use marijuana (also known as cannabis, weed, pot). Pre-teens, teens and youth in their early 20s often seek out new experiences and engage in risky behaviors, such as using marijuana. You can help prevent underage use by starting the conversation about marijuana with youth in your life and making sure they are aware of potential consequences.

This publication was produced by the Sacramento County Coalition for Youth and the City of Sacramento to help parents and teens get the facts on how marijuana can impact their health and their future.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

While the word “cannabis” is regularly used by industry and the state, it suggests a safe medicinal plant. The word “marijuana” is a clear term that all teens understand as a drug. This publication will mainly use the term “marijuana.”

DID YOU KNOW?

Eight out of 10 youth aged 12-17 believe using marijuana once a month is NOT risky.

DID YOU KNOW?

Marijuana can cause permanent physical changes in the brain.



HOW TO TALK TO YOUR TEEN

To help start a conversation about marijuana, follow this advice from the California Department of Public Health:

1 CHOOSE A GOOD TIME AND PLACE

Before bed, on the way to school or after dinner are great times. Try taking a walk or a drive. Less eye contact can make the conversation more comfortable for you both.

3 UNDERSTAND YOUR INFLUENCE

Teens say parents have the biggest influence on their behavior, so talk. A lot. Discuss the negative impacts of marijuana use while talking about celebrity news headlines or depictions of drug use in movies. Share stories of people in recovery or a family history of addiction that could put the teen at greater risk.

2 KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Remain curious and calm, ask open-ended questions (“How do you think using marijuana would impact your life?”) and be an active listener by summing up what you’ve heard (“It seems like you’re feeling ...”).

4 OFFER EMPATHY AND SUPPORT

Let your child know you understand. The teen years can be tough. Acknowledge that everyone struggles sometimes, but drugs and alcohol are not a useful or healthy way to cope with problems. Let your child know that they can trust you.

IN CONTROL OF HER FUTURE

Rhitishah dreams of a career in STEM — and she doesn't want marijuana to get in the way

BY MACKENZIE MENDEZ

Rhitishah Yuva Raju's journey to a substance-free life started with a pact she and her sister made in elementary school.

The two girls decided they wouldn't do anything "where we didn't have control of our own self and our own actions."

"The reason I have chosen not to use marijuana is because I don't want it to cloud my judgment," says Rhitishah, now a junior at Mira Loma High School in the San Juan Unified School District.

Rhitishah knew of the dangers of drugs. Her elementary school held an annual Red Ribbon Week, and her parents "sprinkled" the facts into their conversations. She also watched the news with her parents and saw how famous people she looked up to suffered because of substance abuse.

"I kind of just decided, 'OK, this is something that I *don't* want to do,'" she says.

Once she entered middle school and high school, Rhitishah says her peers started talking more about marijuana. That's also when Rhitishah started to dream of pursuing a degree in neuroscience or psychology. An excellent math and science student, Rhitishah knows she has the skills and capability to

excel in STEM fields — science, technology, engineering and math — which are typically male-dominated. She also knows that marijuana, which negatively impacts the developing teen brain, would stand in the way of that goal.

Rhitishah wants to be a positive role model to other female students.

"My community has given me a lot, and taught me a lot, so a huge thing is teaching younger girls about STEM education and empowering them," she says.

Rhitishah has kept the schoolyard promise she made with her sister. She pours all of her energy into her goals, leading a substance-free life to keep her dreams in focus. "Being marijuana free lets me focus my attention on more important things, like my future," she says.

"I don't want [marijuana] to cloud my judgment."

Rhitishah Yuva Raju
Junior, Mira Loma High School

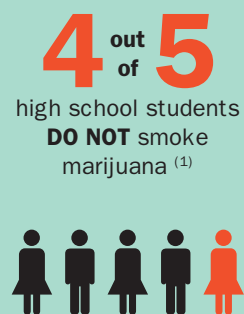


Rhitishah Yuva Raju hopes to study neuroscience or psychology in college, and knows marijuana would get in the way of her goal.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

IS EVERYONE USING MARIJUANA?

Teens may think everyone around them is using marijuana, also known as cannabis. But perception is not reality. Despite what they see in movies and on social media, most teens aren't using marijuana. Many of them know that marijuana use can be harmful.



Percentage of teens who think there is a risk of harm with occasional marijuana use. ⁽²⁾

74% of 7th graders

78% of 9th graders

73% of 11th graders

65%

of high school seniors
disapprove of regular
marijuana use ⁽³⁾



Sources: 1) California Department of Public Health, Tobacco Control Program, 2016. "2016 California Student Tobacco Survey." 2) Sacramento County Data from the CA Healthy Kids Survey, 2015-2017. 3) National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016. "Monitoring the Future Survey: High School and Youth Trends."

THE DOWNSIDE OF GETTING HIGH

BY ANNE STOKES

Sacramento treatment program director sees the negative effects of teen marijuana use



Through her work at Recovery Happens based in Sacramento, CA, Program Director Amy Rose has seen alarming trends in marijuana use: Users are getting younger and drugs are getting stronger.

According to Rose, patients struggling with marijuana (also known as cannabis) abuse are experiencing symptoms and consequences similar to those struggling against opioids and other “hard” drugs.

Recovery Happens is an intensive outpatient program that helps teens, young adults and adults with substance abuse. They also provide resources to parents, schools and local law enforcement officials who are on the front lines dealing with the repercussions of the recent legalization of marijuana in California. Such legal validation is one of the reasons so many people — sometimes even parents — refer to it as “just pot.”

But Rose is seeing teens who are suffering consequences due to their marijuana use: “Their grades are going down, they

no longer want to be a part of sports, they’re isolating, they have extreme highs and lows with anxiety, rage or depression, even feeling suicidal,” she says.

Rose says many of her patients use marijuana because they believe it relieves issues like anxiety and insomnia, but it can

“Their grades are going down, they no longer want to be a part of sports, they’re isolating ... even feeling suicidal.”

Amy Rose
Program Director, Recovery Happens

actually make the conditions worse.

“Teens believe that turning to marijuana will help them cope with and tolerate their feelings when it’s actually doing the opposite,” she says. “It’s minimizing their capacity to be able to sit with any amount of discomfort, which causes them to need to keep going back to the substance.”

Marijuana use can also have social repercussions, including diminished decision-making ability and emotional withdrawal from family and friends. Long-term consequences can also impact higher education and eventual career goals.

“Marijuana users are not as sharp and quick to respond or able to retain information,” Rose says. “Overall their morals and their values start to shift because everything starts to become focused on substance abuse.”

KNOW THE LAW



It is illegal for anyone **under the age of 21** to consume recreational marijuana. However, adults **18 or older** can consume medicinal marijuana with a legal recommendation from a doctor.



Marijuana must be kept in a sealed package and **cannot be consumed — smoked, eaten or vaped — while riding in or driving a vehicle.** This applies to all ages. Law enforcement officers can and will pull you over to conduct a sobriety test.



While marijuana can be consumed on private property, **owners and landlords may ban its possession or use on their property.**



If you are under 21 and caught in possession of marijuana, **you will be required to complete drug education or counseling and community service** (unless you have a valid medical marijuana recommendation).



Marijuana **cannot be consumed in public places**, on federal lands such as national parks or within 1,000 feet of a school, day care or youth center.



Marijuana can only be purchased at retail outlets licensed by the California Bureau of Cannabis Control. **It is illegal to sell any amount of marijuana without a license.**

THINK GETTING HIGH IS NO BIG DEAL?

BY ANNE STOKES

Marijuana can affect a teen's life now AND later. Here's how it can hold them back.



It makes school even harder

Studies have found marijuana use during a teen's formative years can decrease IQ and is associated with lower grades and higher dropout rates. A long-term study released in 2012 found that heavy use in adolescence **can knock a person's IQ down as much as eight points**, even into adulthood. To put it into perspective, eight points can separate someone of average intelligence with someone in the bottom third range. These negative and long-lasting effects can show up not just in test scores, but in daily functioning skills.

Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 2012. Meier, et. al., National Academy of Sciences, 2012.



College is more difficult

Students who have a research grant, scholarship or financial aid to help pay for college could put that funding in jeopardy by using marijuana. Schools that rely on federal funding don't allow marijuana use, sale or possession on campus, even with a medical recommendation. **Collegiate sports programs drug test athletes as well.**

Source: "Persistent Cannabis Dependence and Alcohol Dependence Represent Risks for Midlife Economic and Social Problems: A Longitudinal Cohort Study," March 22, 2016.



That dream job? Think again

Studies have found some employees who use marijuana have more absences, are late to work, have an increased number of workplace accidents, **workers' compensation claims and job turnover rates.** It's little wonder why so many employers drug test potential employees before hiring them, including private companies, government agencies, major sports leagues and any job that requires driving a commercial vehicle.

Source: Zwerling C, Ryan J, Orav EJ. The efficacy of preemployment drug screening for marijuana and cocaine in predicting employment outcome. JAMA.



They could lose their license — or WORSE

Vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death for young drivers, and most of them are caused by substance impairment. **Marijuana can affect coordination, reaction time and critical thinking skills**, all of which are necessary to operate a two-ton hunk of metal. As for legal consequences, drivers can be charged for a DUI while high on marijuana, which can result in thousands of dollars in fines, jail time, license suspension and probation — for a first-time offense.

Source: O'Malley & Johnston, 2013.



They could make less money

Marijuana use has been associated with lower rates of employment and lower annual incomes. In one 2016 study, 51.7 percent of heavy users experienced downward socioeconomic mobility, compared to 14.4 percent of those who reported never using marijuana. A National Institute on Drug Abuse study of current and former users found that heavy marijuana users were more likely than non-users to report an annual **income of less than \$30,000.**

Source: "Persistent Cannabis Dependence and Alcohol Dependence Represent Risks for Midlife Economic and Social Problems: A Longitudinal Cohort Study," March 22, 2016.

MARIJUANA AND THE GROWING BRAIN

How marijuana impacts a young person's body and mind

BY RODNEY OROSCO

Just because cannabis, also known as marijuana, is legal does not mean it is safe for everyone. This is a truth Dr. Roneet Lev sees in the ER every day.

As Chief of the Emergency Department at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego, Dr. Lev treats patients suffering from the effects of marijuana poisoning, which include cardiovascular failure, dangerously high blood pressure, abdominal pain, delirium and cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome, commonly known as “scromiting.”

Because marijuana contains such high levels of the psychoactive chemical THC, she says it has led to an increase in marijuana poisonings.

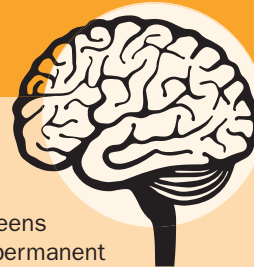
She is not alone in highlighting the dangers of marijuana use, especially in teens. Dr. Daniel Colby, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at UC Davis, says that more research is necessary to fully explain the effects of marijuana on the teen brain. “Marijuana use by teenagers can have detrimental effects on cognitive development,” he says, “and perhaps can even predispose young people to psychiatric disorders.”

“Adolescent cannabis use can impair brain development and is associated with numerous physical and mental health complications. Cannabis is increasingly available through commercial channels and can come in different forms like edibles and vaporizers,” says Sacramento County’s Public Health Officer Dr. Olivia Kasirye. “Today’s marijuana is more potent than ever and it is critical that we all do our part to limit youth access to marijuana and discourage children and teens from using it.”



In 1995, NASA published a study that depicted spider webs made by spiders on different drugs. The image on the left is a web produced by a drug-free spider, while the disorganized one on the right was made by a spider on marijuana. PHOTO PROVIDED BY DAVID A. NOEVER, RAYMOND J. CRONISE, RACHNA A. RELWANI, MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER, NASA

Brain Development



Because the brain does not stop developing until a person is 25, using marijuana regularly in the teens and early 20s may lead to permanent physical changes in the brain, including higher risk of:

- Addiction
- Mental illness
- Seizures
- Lower IQ
- Trouble sleeping

Mental Health/Addiction



Regular marijuana use has been linked to mental illness and addiction, especially in people with a family history of these issues. Studies have shown that if an individual uses marijuana for the first time as a teen, that person's risk for addiction is 17 percent, compared to only 9 percent for individuals who wait to try marijuana after age 21⁽²⁾. Regular use of marijuana can put teens at increased risk for:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicide
- Schizophrenia
- Psychosis
- Addiction

Poisoning



Because the way marijuana is grown has changed, plants now have higher levels of THC, the psychoactive chemical in marijuana. In the 1980s, for example, marijuana contained 2 percent to 4 percent THC. Today, marijuana THC content can be over 25 percent, with some products like edibles (candies, cookies) containing THC levels of up to 30 percent and concentrates (dabs, wax, concentrates used with vape pens) containing much higher THC levels of up to 90 percent.⁽¹⁾ These high THC levels can lead to:

- Scromiting
- Poisoning
- Medication Interaction

Lungs



Like cigarettes, smoking marijuana is harmful to your lungs. The smoke from marijuana has many of the same toxins and chemicals found in cigarette smoke and can increase the risk of:

- Chronic bronchitis
- Asthma
- Lung cancer
- Popped lung

Sources: 1) Techtimes. 2) National Institute of Drug Abuse.

FAQ ON MARIJUANA

We asked Sacramento-area teens what they want to know about marijuana — and got the facts from experts

BY RODNEY OROSCO



Q What is the difference between medical and recreational marijuana use?

A The legal age for recreational marijuana use is 21. People age 18 and over can use marijuana medicinally with a doctor's recommendation. However, it is important to remember that the government agency that keeps our food and medicine safe — the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) — has not approved the marijuana available at dispensaries to treat any medical illness. That is because not a lot of research has shown that marijuana has medical benefits that exceed its risks — the same standard used to approve any medication.

Q Will I get sick or high from secondhand marijuana smoke?

A Secondhand marijuana smoke is more likely to cause someone to get high if they're in an enclosed space with others smoking marijuana. Smoke is smoke, and secondhand marijuana smoke can have the same harmful effects as tobacco smoke. A California Environmental Protection Agency report showed that 33 substances known to cause cancer are present in both marijuana smoke and tobacco smoke. A 2016 study published in the Journal of the American Heart Association suggests that secondhand marijuana smoke can affect heart and blood vessels and stay in your system much longer than secondhand tobacco smoke.

Q Once you start, how hard is it to stop using marijuana?

A Marijuana can be addictive. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens, teens are four to seven times more likely than adults to develop a marijuana use

disorder. Repeated use of marijuana changes the brain (and the body), making it hard for some people to quit. People who are addicted to marijuana or other substances don't recognize they are addicted.

Q If marijuana is so bad for you, what benefits do kids see in it?

A Many teens believe that marijuana is safer than alcohol or other drugs. For example, teens may say, "It is harmless because it is natural."

Teens also turn to marijuana because they believe cannabis reduces stress. A teen's world can seem to be out of control and a very scary place; using marijuana seems to be the answer to ease anxiety and a way to control a small bit of their world. The reality is that research shows marijuana can cause serious problems with learning, feelings and health. In fact, it may increase anxiety in teens, leading to greater distress in their lives.

Q My parents tell me not to do drugs, but I've heard stories about their experiences. Why are they telling me to do something different than what they did?

A As most parents know, the marijuana of today contains much higher THC (the psychoactive element in marijuana) levels. Twenty years ago THC levels were 2 to 4 percent and now can be up to 30 percent, and in products like concentrates, waxes and dabs can be up to 90 percent. The high THC level increase means the possibility of a serious drug reaction with just a small amount of drug used.

Q What should I do if one of my friends is using drugs — what should I tell them to convince them to stop?

A There are many ways to help and support your friend, but in the end, it will need to be your friend's decision. Sometimes our friends won't appreciate advice they don't want to hear — especially if they're using drugs. But telling the truth to help someone close to you is part of being a real friend, even when it's hard to do.

Just telling your friend that you're concerned can be a big help. Your friend may not want to talk about it, and the effects of drugs on the brain may keep them from "hearing" you or acting on your advice.

Share with your friend the facts about today's marijuana. Share the changes you have seen in their behavior. Suggest that your friend talk to someone who can help about their drug use.

Don't give up on your friend, even if they are not ready to get help. Keep reaching out. Encourage them to get treatment, and support them along the way — that's the best way to help someone you care about who is struggling with addiction. Encourage friends to do their own research — but make sure to note the source. Some sources have something to gain from youth marijuana use.



MARIJUANA? NOT IN MY LIFE

PARENTS!

Teens want the facts about marijuana, and they need to hear it from you. According to the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, youth who learn about the dangers of marijuana use early and often are much less likely to use it than those who do not receive these critical messages at home.

For more information

California Department of Public Health
"Let's Talk Cannabis" campaign:
cdph.ca.gov

Smart Approaches to Marijuana:
learnaboutsam.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse for Parents:
teens.drugabuse.gov/parents

Partnership for Drug-Free Kids Marijuana Talk Kit:
drugfree.org/download/marijuana-talk-kit/

GET INVOLVED!

Join us in our work to further regulate and limit youth access to alcohol and marijuana. Connect with the Sacramento County Coalition for Youth and stay informed about the Future Forward Campaign. Both teens and parents can get involved with local leadership and prevention opportunities.

www.sacramentoccy.org

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