



**PREVENT YOUTH  
MARIJUANA USE**

**TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS & CAREGIVERS**

**RISK FACTORS/WARNING SIGNS**

**PREVENTION: WHAT YOU CAN DO**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**TALKING TO YOUR KIDS**

**RESOURCES**

# RISK FACTORS



- Belief that there are little or no risks associated with marijuana use.
- Easy access to marijuana.
- Exposure to peer pressure or a social environment where there is drug use.
- Lack of parental supervision and/or exposure to marijuana use in the home.
- Lack of knowledge about marijuana and its effects.
- Past or present use of other substances, including alcohol.

## WARNING SIGNS

- Changes in behavior, such as carelessness with grooming, mood changes and deteriorating relationships with family members and friends.
- Changes in academic performance, skipping school, getting in trouble at school.
- Seems unusually giggly and/or uncoordinated.
- Very red, bloodshot eyes or frequently using eye drops.
- Having a hard time remembering things that just happened.
- Drug paraphernalia, including pipes and rolling papers (perhaps claiming they belong to a friend, if confronted)
- Strangely smelling clothes or bedroom.
- Using incense and other deodorizers.
- Clothing or jewelry or posters that promote drug use.
- Unexplained lack of money or a surplus of cash on hand.

*NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p22*

RISK FACTORS/WARNING SIGNS

# PREVENTION

## WHAT YOU CAN DO



**Have the conversation.** As some children begin experimenting with alcohol, tobacco and marijuana as young as age 10, it is important to start the conversation early and continue throughout the teen years. Communicate your values and message clearly. Make sure you are up to date on the risks and legal ramifications of youth marijuana use. Share your concern for their health and safety.

**Have a clear message.** Substance use is not a rite of passage, and not all kids experiment with drugs or alcohol. Teens who use substances have more problems with school, the law, their health and forming healthy relationships. Let them know there are consequences to substance use – both in terms of their health and for breaking your rules.

**Set a good example.** They watch what you do.

**Use teachable moments and normalize the discussion.** Use that time in the car or when there's a story about substance abuse in the news to have the discussion.

**Recognize signs of drug use.** Significant changes in a teen's personality, motivation, sleep and grooming habits, appearance and friend group can signal a problem. Missing money or items that disappear from the home may mean something's going on. Drug paraphernalia that teens try to explain away as belonging to a friend is a red flag. Don't be afraid to confront your child.

**Get help at the first sign of trouble.** Parents often underestimate the seriousness of drug use, especially with alcohol and marijuana. Seek out a professional and ask for help. Reach out to a guidance counselor or call a nearby counseling center to access prevention education and intervention services or for an evaluation. Your child's future depends on it.

*Rosecrance; Teens & Weed: Still a Big Deal, A Parent's Guide to Talking with a Teenager About Marijuana*

PREVENTION: WHAT YOU CAN DO

# DID YOU KNOW?



## **Recreational marijuana use is illegal for anyone under the age of 21.**

- ▶ **Marijuana can be addictive.** Research suggests 30 percent of users may develop some form of problem use, which can lead to dependence and addiction. People who begin using marijuana before age 18 are 4 to 7 times more likely than adults to develop problem use.  
*NIDA; Marijuana, July 2018*
- ▶ **Marijuana is unsafe if you are behind the wheel.** Marijuana compromises judgment and affects many other skills required for safe driving: alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time.  
*NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p6*
- ▶ **Perception of harm.** In Oakland County only 45 percent of high school students report thinking that smoking marijuana once or twice a week to be moderate or great risk. 17.8 percent of high school students report using marijuana in the past 30 days.  
*2018 Oakland County MIPHY*
- ▶ **Marijuana is associated with school failure.** Marijuana has negative effects on attention, motivation, memory and learning that can persist after the drug's immediate effects wear off – especially in regular users. Compared with their non-smoking peers, students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school.  
*NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p7*
- ▶ **Marijuana potency has increased.** In the early 1990s, average THC content was roughly 3.7 percent for marijuana; in 2016, it was 13.18 percent. Marijuana concentrates contain up to 90 percent pure THC. Youth often consume these concentrates in electronic vaping devices.  
*NIDA; Marijuana, 2017*
- ▶ **Marijuana affects mental and emotional development.** Marijuana use can be especially toxic to a developing teenager's brain. It can lead to impaired short-term memory, perception, judgment and motor skills. Regular marijuana use has been associated with depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and personality disturbances.  
*NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p19, 20*

# TALKING TO YOUR KIDS



*Conversations can be a powerful tool parents can use to connect with and protect kids. When tackling a tough topic, such as marijuana, figuring out what to say can be challenging. Here are some sample conversations that may be helpful.*

**Teens May Say:** Marijuana is legal in Michigan now, so why shouldn't I try it?

**Parent Response:** Recreational marijuana use is legal for people who are 21 or older. I don't want you using marijuana or making other choices that have a negative impact on your future. I'm also concerned about marijuana concentrates because they can cause paranoia, anxiety, panic attacks and hallucinations. Your brain is still developing, and using marijuana changes your brain in harmful ways. These changes can lower your IQ and change your ability to remember information.

**Teens May Say:** Michigan has medical marijuana, so if doctors can prescribe weed, it can't hurt me.

**Parent Response:** Doctors prescribe it for serious medical conditions, but that doesn't make it "good" for you. All drugs have side effects, and all drugs can be harmful if abused, even those that are prescribed by doctors. Besides, it's not legal for you. You have to break the law to get it.

**Teens May Say:** I'm just trying it out, like everybody else my age. It's not like I'm going to smoke weed forever.

**Parent Response:** Not everybody's doing it. Do you know that the earlier you start using marijuana, the more likely you are to get addicted? The consequences can be deep and long-term. Many studies show that marijuana users don't do as well in life as other people. They get worse grades and drop out of school more often.

**Teens May Say:** Weed isn't even addictive.

**Parent Response:** People who want to keep using marijuana always say that, but research shows marijuana IS addictive. Smoking pot changes the brain – just like other drugs. I'll bet you know kids who obsess about how and when they're going to get high again. They might blow off things they used to care about, including school. That's addictive behavior.

**Teens May Say:** I'll bet you smoked pot when you were my age! What's the difference?

**Parent Response:** There is a difference. Marijuana has changed. It's much stronger than it used to be and way more addictive. My job is to protect and teach you. I can tell you that my life is no better because I smoked pot. I admit to making some poor decisions when I was your age, but I made some good ones, too. One of them was moving beyond that risky behavior. I hope you will let me help you make good decisions for your health and safety and your future.

**OR** I didn't smoke marijuana because I was afraid of where it could lead, and I didn't want to risk getting in trouble with police, school or my parents. And, I didn't want to risk getting addicted. I do know that today's marijuana is far more potent than it was back then, and many other drugs are more available to kids today. As your parent, I want to help you make good decisions.

Rosecrance; *Teens & Weed: Still a Big Deal, A Parent's Guide to Talking with a Teenager About Marijuana*  
NIDA 2017

# RESOURCES



## **The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids**

[drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org)

## **Oakland Community Health Network**

(248) 858-1210 • [oaklandchn.org](http://oaklandchn.org)

## **Mental Health and Substance Use Access Services**

(248) 464-6363 non-emergency

## **Common Ground**

Resource & Crisis Helpline • (800) 231-1127

## **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**

[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

## **Talk Sooner: Helping Parents Prevent Youth Substance Abuse**

[talksooner.org/drugs/marijuana](http://talksooner.org/drugs/marijuana)

## **Truth Initiative**

[truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org)

## **NIDA for Teens**

[teens.drugabuse.gov](http://teens.drugabuse.gov)

## **Project SAM: Smart Approaches to Marijuana**

[learnaboutsam.org](http://learnaboutsam.org)

## **About The Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities**

*The Alliance is a network of over nineteen community prevention coalitions serving 55+ local communities. The Alliance is comprised of individuals and organizations who share our commitment to building healthy and drug-free communities.*



## **Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities**

(248) 221-7101 • [achcmi.org](http://achcmi.org)

## MYTH

Marijuana is not addictive.

## FACT

Recent research has shown that regular marijuana use can lead to dependence. Marijuana use has been shown to be three times more likely to lead to dependence among adolescents than among adults.

---

## MYTH

Marijuana helps treat cancer and other diseases.

## FACT

Research shows that marijuana, as a smoked product, has never proven to be medically beneficial. In fact, it is much more likely to harm one's health. The adverse effects of marijuana smoke on the respiratory system would offset any possible benefit.

---

## MYTH

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

## FACT

Kids who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents or caregivers are less likely to use drugs than kids who do not. Open communication between parents and children gives young people confidence and helps them make healthy choices.

---

## MYTH

Recreational marijuana use is legal for everyone in Michigan.

## FACT

Recreational marijuana use is illegal for anyone who is under the age of 21 and public use of marijuana is illegal for everyone.

---

