



Teens

What You Need To Know About Marijuana Use and Teens

Fast Facts

- In 2019, 4 in 10 high school students reported using marijuana in their lifetime.¹
- Marijuana use might have permanent effects on the developing brain when use begins in adolescence, especially with regular or heavy use.^{3,4}
- Compared with teens who do not use marijuana, teens who use marijuana are more likely to quit high school or not get a college degree.³

The teen years are a time of growth, exploration, and risk-taking. Some risk-taking may foster identity development and independence (e.g., running for student council, asking someone out on a date). However, some risk behaviors—such as using marijuana—can have adverse effects on a teen's health and well-being.

How many teens use marijuana?

In 2019, 37% of US high school students reported lifetime use of marijuana and 22% reported use in the past 30 days.¹ Past-year vaping of marijuana also remained steady in 2020 following large increases in 2018 and 2019. However, large percentages of middle and high school students reported past-year marijuana vaping—8% of eighth graders, 19% of 10th graders, and 22% of 12th graders.²

Marijuana and the teen brain

The teen brain is actively developing and continues to develop until around age 25. Marijuana use during adolescence and young adulthood may harm the developing brain.^{3,4}

Negative effects of teen marijuana use include³:

- Difficulty thinking and problem-solving
- Problems with memory and learning
- Reduced coordination
- Difficulty maintaining attention
- Problems with school and social life

How marijuana can impact a teen's life:

- **Increased risk of mental health issues.** Marijuana use has been linked to a range of mental health problems, such as depression and social anxiety.³ People who use marijuana are more likely to develop temporary psychosis (not knowing what is real, hallucinations, and paranoia) and long-lasting mental disorders, including schizophrenia (a type of mental illness where people might see or hear things that aren't there).⁵ The association between marijuana and schizophrenia is stronger in people who start using marijuana at an earlier age and use marijuana more frequently.
- **Impaired driving.** Driving while impaired by any substance, including marijuana, is dangerous and illegal. Marijuana negatively affects several skills required for safe driving, such as reaction time, coordination, and concentration.^{3,6}
- **Potential for addiction.** Approximately 3 in 10 people who use marijuana have marijuana use disorder.⁷ Some signs and symptoms of marijuana use disorder include trying but failing to quit using marijuana or giving up important activities with friends and family in favor of using marijuana.⁸ The risk of developing marijuana use disorder is stronger in people who start using marijuana during youth or adolescence and who use marijuana more frequently.⁹

Learn more

[Marijuana Use and Teens](#)

[CDC's Marijuana and Public Health](#)

[CDC's Impaired Driving: Get the Facts](#)

[NIDA Drug Facts: Marijuana](#)

[NIDA Marijuana: Facts for Teens](#)

References

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