



# Marijuana: Is it Safe for Teens?

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This document answers some frequently asked questions about using marijuana as a teenager. If you have further questions or are concerned about your marijuana use please talk to your doctor.

## **Is marijuana safe for me to use?**

No, using marijuana if you are younger than the age of 18 (adolescence) is especially dangerous because it can cause significant, permanent effects on brain development. Adolescents dependent on marijuana before 18 years can have decreased IQ and changes in motivation, decision-making and memory that persist into adulthood.

## **Does marijuana help with my mood symptoms?**

No, marijuana use in adolescents can cause or worsen mood symptoms, including depression and anxiety. Adolescents using marijuana significantly increase their risk of developing schizophrenia as adults, which is a debilitating and lifelong psychiatric disease.

## **Is marijuana a type of medicine?**

The chemicals in marijuana have been extracted and used as a medicine to help with nausea and vomiting in adult cancer patients. However, adolescents are affected differently than adults and marijuana itself is not a medicine. Marijuana does not help treat depression or anxiety symptoms, and may actually worsen mood symptoms.

## **Can marijuana use affect my driving?**

Yes, marijuana use impairs your ability to drive and leads to an increased risk of accidents by slowing down motor coordination, reaction time and judgment, similar to alcohol use. Driving while intoxicated with marijuana is a criminal offense.

## **Can marijuana use affect me at school?**

Yes, the effects of marijuana last longer than the initial “high” and can cause difficulty with concentration, attention, memory, and problem-solving for several days. This can affect your ability to study and your performance on assignments up to a week after marijuana use. Using marijuana frequently can cause your grades to drop, which can interfere with your completion of high school or college.

## **Is marijuana addictive?**

Yes, marijuana is addictive, with an increased risk for addiction in adolescents. Addiction can cause problems at school and with family, and can lead to significant issues in adulthood.

If you are concerned you or someone you know may be addicted to marijuana, there is support and resources available to help quit. Start by asking your pediatrician or looking at online resources including the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.

- Alcoholism and Drug Dependence:  
<https://www.ncadd.org>
- Drug Abuse programs:  
<http://drugabuse.com/drug-abuse-programs/>

## Additional Resources:

If you are concerned about marijuana use, or want to learn more visit the links below.

- CDC Surgeon General's Warning on Marijuana:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00001143.htm>
- American Psychological Association:  
<http://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/marijuana-brain.aspx>

## References:

1. Swick, Susan D. and Jellinek, Michael. Debunking marijuana myths for teens. Pediatric News. Dec 22, 2015.
2. Nierengarten, Mary Beth. Talking to teens about marijuana. Contemporary Pediatrics, February 1, 2016

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