

**Q: How can you tell if someone has been using marijuana?**

**A:** If someone is high on marijuana, he or she might

- seem dizzy and have trouble walking;
- seem silly and giggly for no reason;
- have very red, bloodshot eyes; and
- have a hard time remembering things that just happened.

When the early effects fade, over a few hours, the user can become very sleepy.

**Q: Can people become addicted to marijuana?**

**A:** Yes. Long-term marijuana use can lead to addiction in some people. That is, they cannot control their urges to seek out and use marijuana, even though it negatively affects their family relationships, school performance, and recreational activities. According to one study, marijuana use by teenagers who have prior antisocial problems can quickly lead to addiction. In addition, some frequent, heavy marijuana users develop "tolerance" to its effects. This means they need larger and larger amounts of marijuana to get the same desired effects as they used to get from smaller amounts.

**Q: What if a person wants to quit using the drug?**

**A:** In 2002, over 280,000 people entering drug treatment programs reported marijuana as their primary drug of abuse. However, up until a few years ago, it was hard to find treatment programs specifically for marijuana users.

Now researchers are testing different ways to help marijuana users abstain from drug use. There are currently no medications for treating marijuana addiction. Treatment programs focus on counseling and group support systems. There are also a number of programs designed especially to help teenagers who are abusers. Family doctors can be a good source for information and help in dealing with adolescent marijuana problems.



## How does Marijuana affect driving?

Marijuana has serious harmful effects on the skills required to drive safely: alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time. Marijuana use can make it difficult to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road.

Marijuana may play a role in car accidents. In one study conducted in Memphis, TN, researchers found that, of 150 reckless drivers who were tested for drugs at the arrest scene, 33 percent tested positive for marijuana, and 12 percent tested positive for both marijuana and cocaine. Data has also shown that while smoking marijuana, people show the same lack of coordination on standard "drunk driver" tests as do people who have had too much to drink.

The Make A Promise  
Coalition for a Drug-Free  
Warren County

# Let's Talk about...

# Marijuana

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# The History of Marijuana

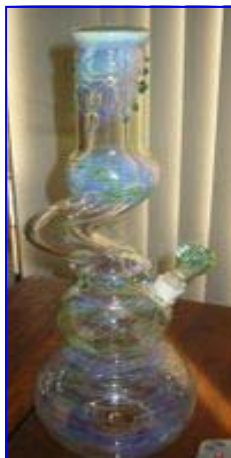
Marijuana has been used throughout history in many different cultures to change mood, perception, and consciousness - in other words, to get high. Its effects range from increasing creativity to provoking mystical experiences, to heightening the capacity to feel, sense and share. After alcohol, it is the most popular of what are called "recreational drugs." It has been used around the world for other purposes. In some primitive tribes of South America, Africa, and India, "cannabis" is used in religious ceremonies and for medical purposes. It has been used as an intoxicant in various parts of the world for centuries and in the United States mostly in the 20th century. Marijuana was first described in print in a Chinese book of medicine, "Herbal," in the 2nd century B.C., and was used in China as an anesthetic 5,000 years ago. The Assyrians began using it as an incense in the 9th century. As early as 1611, marijuana was cultivated for its fiber in Jamestown, Virginia. In 19th century America, it was used by the medical profession for treating spastic conditions, headaches, labor pains, insomnia, and menstrual cramps. It is still used as a medicine in the Middle East and in Asia.

## What is Marijuana?

**Marijuana is the most commonly abused illicit drug in the United States. A dry, shredded green/brown mix of flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves of the hemp plant Cannabis sativa, it usually is smoked as a cigarette (joint, nail), or in a pipe (bong).**



Cannabis Seeds



A glass bong— a common way of smoking cannabis



**"When I would sit down and try to figure something out it was like my brain stopped working."**

**- from the videotape, Marijuana: What Can Parents Do?**

## What does Marijuana do to the brain?

**Some studies show that when people have smoked large amounts of marijuana for years, the drug takes its toll on mental functions. Heavy or daily use of marijuana affects the parts of the brain that control memory, attention, and learning. A working short-term memory is needed to learn and perform tasks that call for more than one or two steps.**

**Smoking marijuana causes some changes in the brain that are like those caused by cocaine, heroin, and alcohol. Scientists are still learning about the many ways that marijuana can affect the brain.**



# Health Effects of Marijuana

**Q: What are the long-term effects of marijuana use?**

**A: Findings so far show that regular use of marijuana or THC may play a role in some kinds of cancer and in problems with the respiratory and immune systems.**

- Cancer- It's hard to know for sure whether regular marijuana use causes cancer. But it is known that marijuana contains some of the same, and sometimes even more, of the cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke. Studies show that someone who smokes five joints per day may be taking in as many cancer-causing chemicals as someone who smokes a full pack of cigarettes every day.**

- Lungs and airways- People who smoke marijuana often develop the same kinds of breathing problems that cigarette smokers have: coughing and wheezing. They tend to have more chest colds than nonusers. They are also at greater risk of getting lung infections like pneumonia.**

- Immune system- Animal studies have found that THC can damage the cells and tissues in the body that help protect against disease. When the immune cells are weakened you are more likely to get sick.**

*4 oz. of marijuana ready for distribution*

