

Marijuana: Talking Points for Parents and Teens

1. Marijuana is not a benign drug for teens. The teenage brain is still developing, and marijuana may cause abnormal brain development.

2. Teens who use marijuana regularly may develop serious mental health disorders, including addiction, depression, and psychosis.

3. There are no research studies on the use of medical marijuana in teens, so actual indications, appropriate dosing, effects, and side effects are unknown. The only data available on medical marijuana in the pediatric population are limited to its use in children with severe refractory seizures.

4. Recreational use of marijuana by minors and young adults under the age of 21 years is illegal and, if prosecuted, may result in a permanent criminal record, affecting school, jobs, etc.

5. Never drive under the influence of marijuana or ride in a car with a driver who is under the influence of marijuana. Adults and teens regularly get into serious and even fatal car accidents while under the influence of marijuana.

6. Marijuana smoke is toxic, similar to secondhand tobacco smoke. The use of vaporizers or hookahs does not eliminate the toxic chemicals in marijuana smoke.

7. For parents: You are role models for your children, and actions speak louder than words. So if you use marijuana in front of your teens, they are more likely to use it themselves, regardless of

whether you tell them not to. (See the AAP Healthy Children Web site: www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/substance-abuse/Pages/Drug-Abuse-Prevention-Starts-with-Parents.aspx.)

8. For parents: It is important to keep all marijuana products away from children. As with other medications and toxic products, containers that are child-proof and kept out of reach should be used. For small children, marijuana edibles and drinks can be particularly dangerous.

9. For parents: Remember that intoxication and euphoria are predictable effects of using marijuana products. Being “high” from your own recreational or medical marijuana use may alter your capacity to function safely as a parent or to provide a safe environment for infants and children.

10. For parents: If your child asks you directly whether you have used marijuana, a brief, honest answer may help the child feel comfortable talking with you about drug use issues. However, it is best to not share your own histories of drug use with your children. Rather, discussion of drug use scenarios, in general, may be a more helpful approach.

Reprinted with permission from Ryan SA, Ammerman SD; AAP Committee on Substance Use and Prevention. Counseling parents and teens about marijuana use in the era of legalization of marijuana. *Pediatrics*. 2017;139(3):e20164069.

July 2018



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

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