

MARIJUANA FAST FACTS

Marijuana is—

- Most commonly abused illicit (unlawful) drug in the United States.
- A dry, shredded green/brown mix of flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves from the hemp plant.

How is marijuana abused?

- Smoked as a cigarette (joint), or in a pipe/blunts.
- Mixed in food or brewed as a tea.

How does marijuana affect the brain?

- Acts upon specific brain receptors that lead to the *high*—passing from lungs into bloodstream.
- Causes difficulty in perception, coordination, thinking, problem-solving, learning, and memory.

Addictive potential for marijuana—

- Long-term marijuana use leads to addiction—9% of users become addicted.
- Withdrawal symptoms include irritability, sleeplessness, decreased appetite, anxiety, and drug craving.

Marijuana and mental health correlation—

- Chronic (long-lasting) marijuana use is associated with increased rates of anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia.

What other harmful effects does marijuana have on health?

- Marijuana effects the heart—
 - Heart rate increases by 20% to 100% shortly after smoking; can last up to 3 hours.
 - Risk for heart attack increases in the first hour after smoking marijuana.
- Marijuana effects the lungs—
 - Marijuana smoke contains 50% to 70% more hydrocarbons than tobacco smoke—may increase cancer risk. (*Note: Hydrocarbon is a compound made of hydrogen and carbon.*)
 - Causes respiratory problems: daily cough and phlegm and increased risk of lung infections.
- Marijuana effects on daily life—
 - Marijuana impairs physical/mental health, cognitive abilities, social life, and career status.
 - Increases work problems—absences, tardiness, and accidents.

What treatment options exist for marijuana users?

- Counseling treatments (cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing)
- No medications are currently available.

Is marijuana medicine?

- Marijuana contains ingredients that can help relieve pain, decrease nausea, stimulate appetite, and decrease fluid pressure inside the eye.
- Scientists continue to investigate the medicinal properties of marijuana to help patients.

References—

- NIDA InfoFacts, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/infofacts/marijuana>, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, United States Department of Health and Human Services.