

THE TRUTH ABOUT

MARIJUANA

Chronic
Herb

Smoke

Weed
Pot

Grass
Dope

drugfreeworld.org



WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

You hear a lot of talk about drugs these days—at school, in the streets, on the Internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

What you may not know is that much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Former drug dealers have said they would tell people anything to get them to buy drugs.

You need the real facts and the truth about drugs so you can make an informed decision about them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so let us know what you think about this booklet. Visit us on the web at **drugfreeworld.org** and e-mail us at **info@drugfreeworld.org**.

WHAT IS MARIJUANA?

Marijuana is one of the most abused drugs in the world. There is an ever-growing gap between the latest science about marijuana and the myths surrounding it. Some people think that since it is legal in some places, it must be safe. But your body doesn't know a legal drug from an illegal drug. It only knows the effect the drug creates once you have taken it. The purpose of this booklet is to clear up some of the misunderstandings about pot.

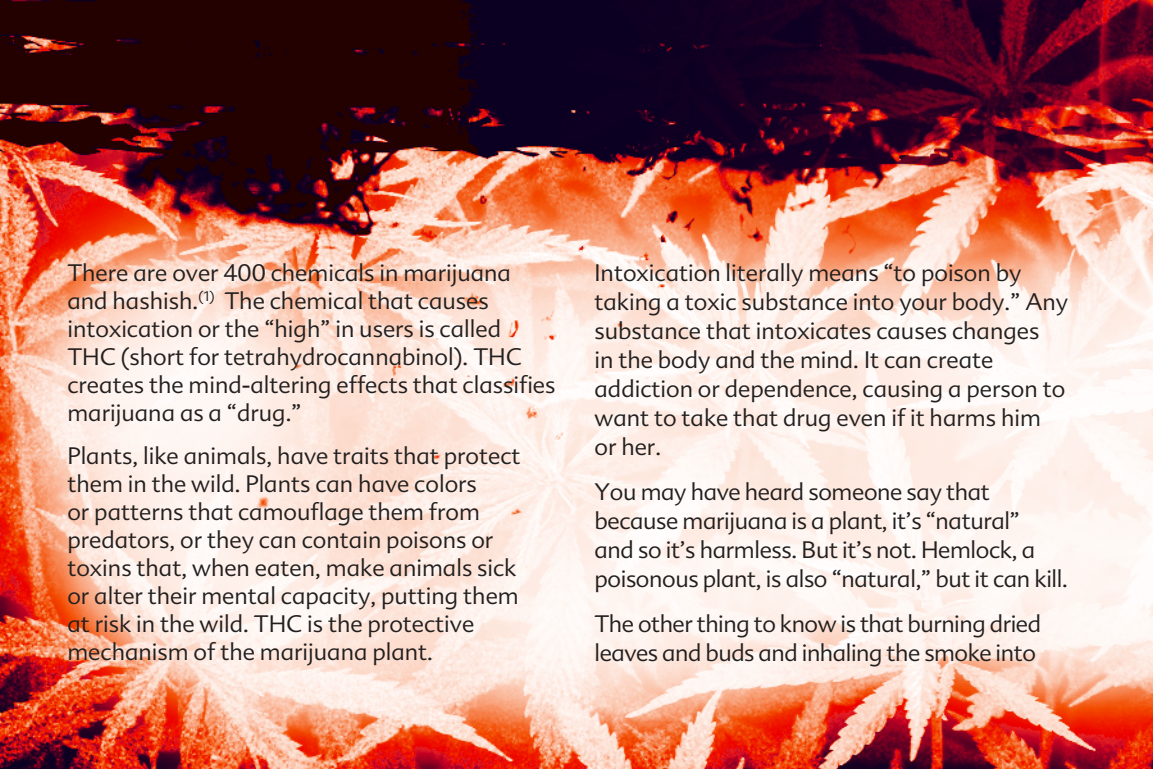
Marijuana comes from the Indian hemp plant, and the part that contains the "drug" is found primarily in the flowers (commonly called the

"buds") and much less in the seeds, leaves, and stems of the plant.

Marijuana, when sold, is a mixture of dried out leaves, stems, flowers and seeds of the hemp plant. It is usually green, brown or gray in color.

Hashish is tan, brown or black resin that is dried and pressed into bars, sticks or balls. When smoked, both marijuana and hashish give off a distinctive, sweet odor.





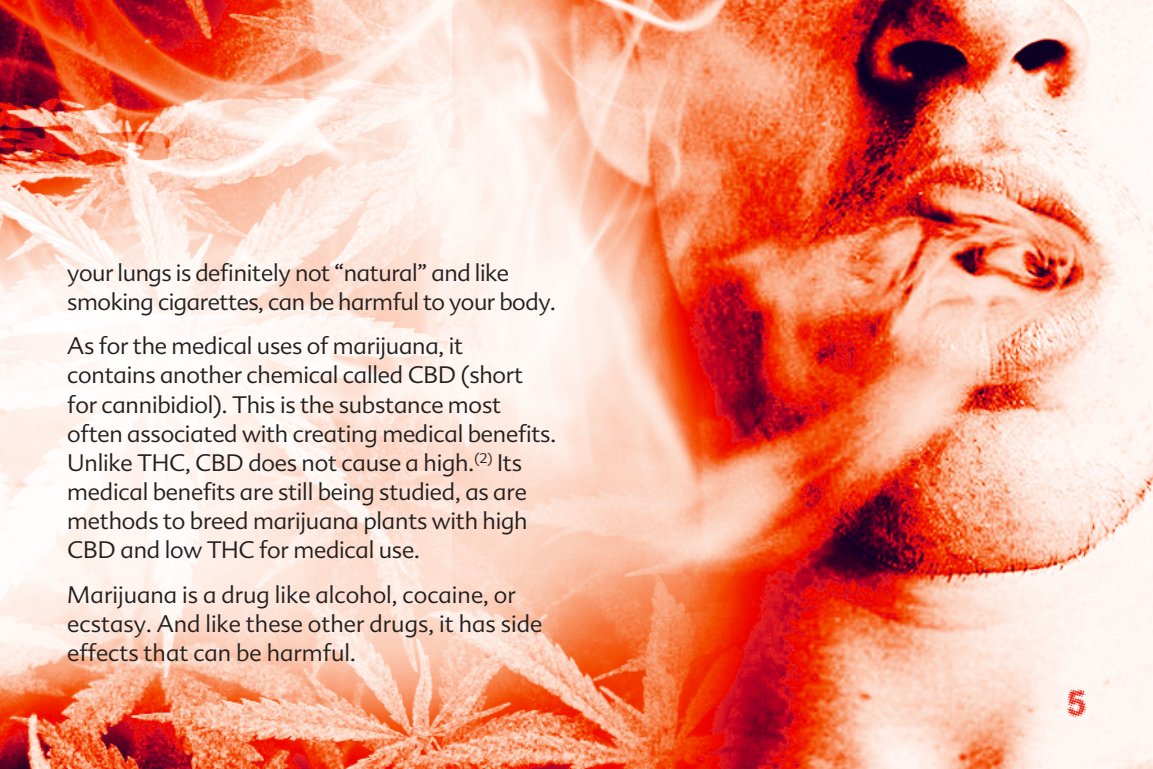
There are over 400 chemicals in marijuana and hashish.⁽¹⁾ The chemical that causes intoxication or the “high” in users is called THC (short for tetrahydrocannabinol). THC creates the mind-altering effects that classifies marijuana as a “drug.”

Plants, like animals, have traits that protect them in the wild. Plants can have colors or patterns that camouflage them from predators, or they can contain poisons or toxins that, when eaten, make animals sick or alter their mental capacity, putting them at risk in the wild. THC is the protective mechanism of the marijuana plant.

Intoxication literally means “to poison by taking a toxic substance into your body.” Any substance that intoxicates causes changes in the body and the mind. It can create addiction or dependence, causing a person to want to take that drug even if it harms him or her.

You may have heard someone say that because marijuana is a plant, it’s “natural” and so it’s harmless. But it’s not. Hemlock, a poisonous plant, is also “natural,” but it can kill.

The other thing to know is that burning dried leaves and buds and inhaling the smoke into



your lungs is definitely not “natural” and like smoking cigarettes, can be harmful to your body.

As for the medical uses of marijuana, it contains another chemical called CBD (short for cannibidiol). This is the substance most often associated with creating medical benefits. Unlike THC, CBD does not cause a high.⁽²⁾ Its medical benefits are still being studied, as are methods to breed marijuana plants with high CBD and low THC for medical use.

Marijuana is a drug like alcohol, cocaine, or ecstasy. And like these other drugs, it has side effects that can be harmful.



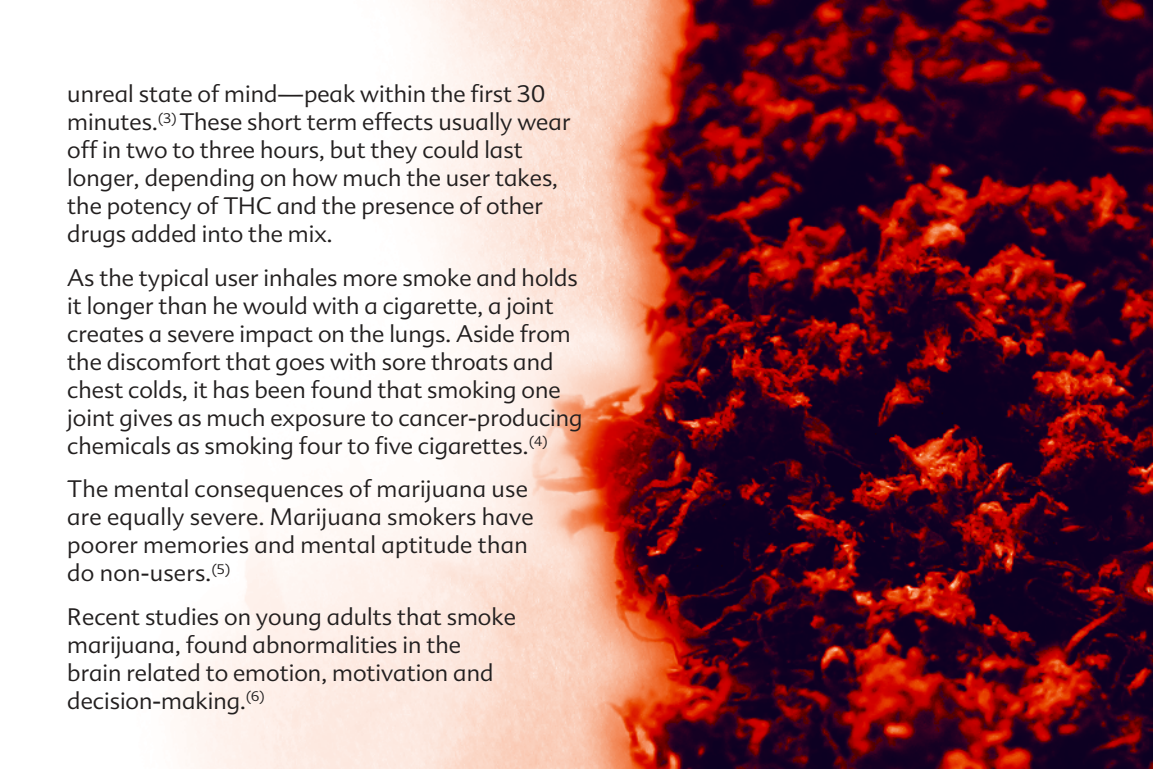
HOW IS IT USED?

Marijuana can be smoked as a cigarette (joint), but may also be smoked in a dry pipe or a water pipe known as a “bong.” It can also be mixed with food and eaten or brewed as tea. These are called “edibles” and are covered in detail later in this booklet. Sometimes users open up cigars and remove the tobacco, replacing it with pot—called a “blunt.” Joints and blunts are sometimes laced with other, more powerful drugs, such as crack cocaine or PCP (phencyclidine, a powerful hallucinogen).

Marijuana is a mixture of dried-out leaves, stems, flowers and seeds of the hemp plant. It is usually green, brown or gray in color.

Hashish is tan, brown or black resin that is dried and pressed into bars, sticks or balls. When smoked, both marijuana and hashish give off a distinctive, sweet odor.

When a person inhales the smoke from a joint or a pipe, he usually feels its effect within minutes. The immediate sensations—increased heart rate, lessened coordination and balance, and a “dreamy,”



unreal state of mind—peak within the first 30 minutes.⁽³⁾ These short term effects usually wear off in two to three hours, but they could last longer, depending on how much the user takes, the potency of THC and the presence of other drugs added into the mix.

As the typical user inhales more smoke and holds it longer than he would with a cigarette, a joint creates a severe impact on the lungs. Aside from the discomfort that goes with sore throats and chest colds, it has been found that smoking one joint gives as much exposure to cancer-producing chemicals as smoking four to five cigarettes.⁽⁴⁾

The mental consequences of marijuana use are equally severe. Marijuana smokers have poorer memories and mental aptitude than do non-users.⁽⁵⁾

Recent studies on young adults that smoke marijuana, found abnormalities in the brain related to emotion, motivation and decision-making.⁽⁶⁾

DABBING

THC extracted into an oil can be evaporated into a sticky goo or wax that is smoked or, more popularly, vaporized. That goo can be further refined into a hard glass-like substance often called “shatter.”

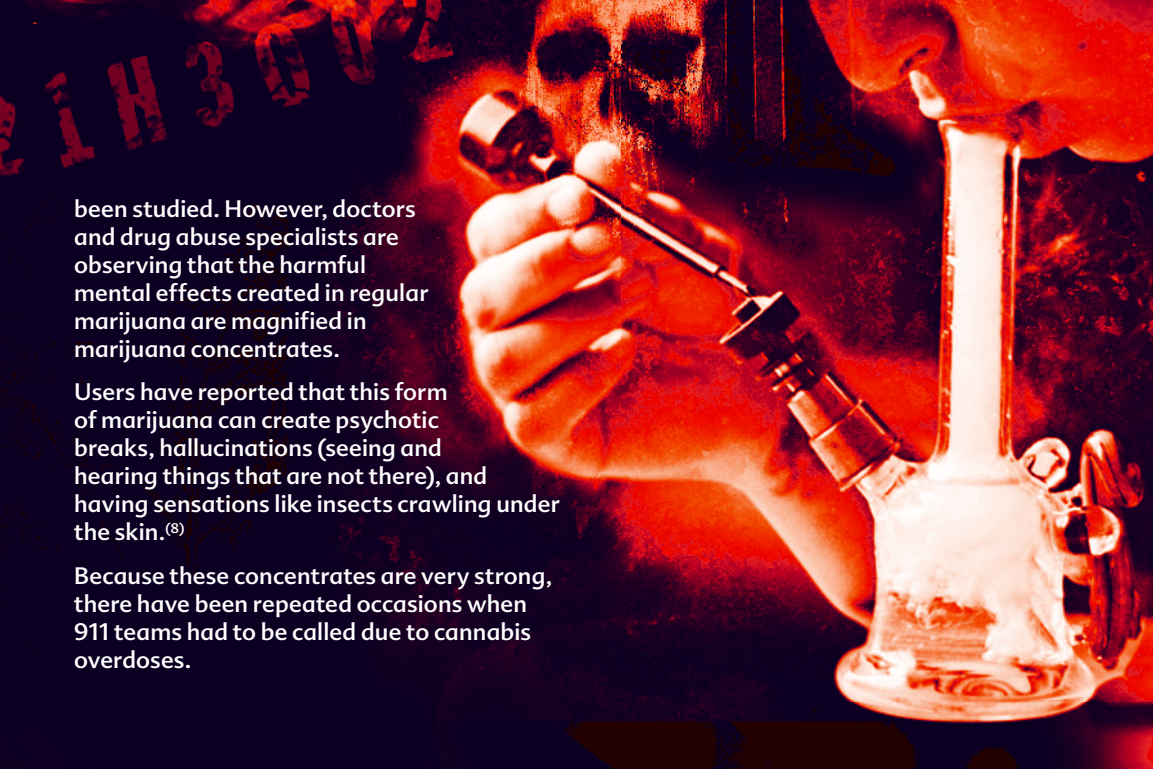
This concentrated form of marijuana is heated quickly on a very hot surface, vaporized, and then inhaled through a special apparatus, sometimes called a “dab rig” or an “oil rig.” This process is called dabbing.

THE EFFECTS OF DABBING

When a person inhales a concentrated “hit” through dabbing, the physical and mental effects that happen with smoking marijuana are intensified.

The THC content in dabs ranges from 60% to as high as 90%.⁽⁷⁾

Marijuana concentrates are so new on the scene that their harmful effects have not

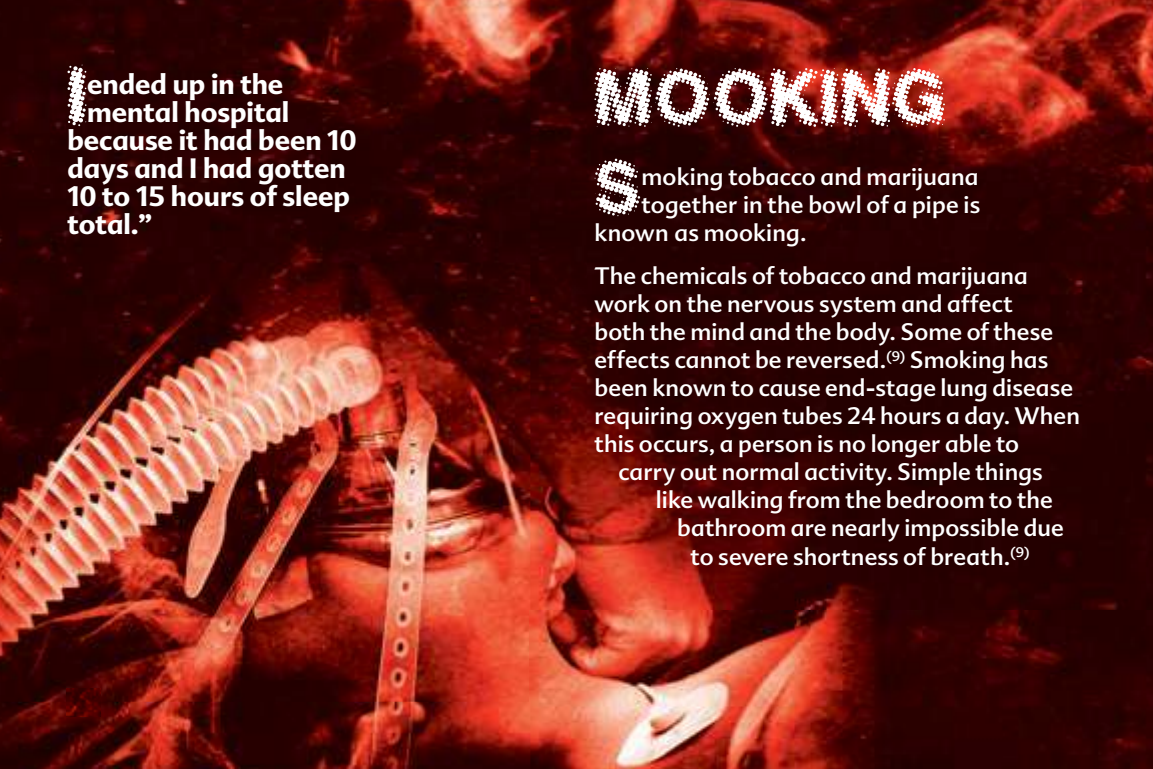


THE SOURCE

been studied. However, doctors and drug abuse specialists are observing that the harmful mental effects created in regular marijuana are magnified in marijuana concentrates.

Users have reported that this form of marijuana can create psychotic breaks, hallucinations (seeing and hearing things that are not there), and having sensations like insects crawling under the skin.⁽⁸⁾

Because these concentrates are very strong, there have been repeated occasions when 911 teams had to be called due to cannabis overdoses.



**ended up in the
mental hospital
because it had been 10
days and I had gotten
10 to 15 hours of sleep
total.”**

MOOKING

Smoking tobacco and marijuana together in the bowl of a pipe is known as mooking.

The chemicals of tobacco and marijuana work on the nervous system and affect both the mind and the body. Some of these effects cannot be reversed.⁽⁹⁾ Smoking has been known to cause end-stage lung disease requiring oxygen tubes 24 hours a day. When this occurs, a person is no longer able to carry out normal activity. Simple things like walking from the bedroom to the bathroom are nearly impossible due to severe shortness of breath.⁽⁹⁾

EDIBLES

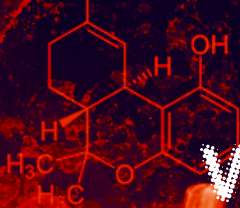
Marijuana or hash oil can be mixed with food or beverages commonly called “edibles.” Brownies, cookies, candy, sodas and tea are some of the popular forms.

When a person smokes marijuana, he feels the effects immediately. When a person eats or drinks marijuana mixed food or drinks, it may take 30 to 45 minutes to digest, so the length of time for the drug to become activated is longer. In other words, the person doesn't feel the effects immediately. Because of this, people often eat more. When the effects finally hit, the chances of becoming extremely intoxicated and even having a psychotic episode are greatly increased.

The amount of marijuana in edibles can vary widely, and the amount of THC can be so

great, people have reported extreme paranoia and anxiety bordering on psychotic behavior as a result.

Here are just a few notable cases involving edibles: A reporter for *The New York Times* ate a marijuana-infused candy bar and spent eight hours curled up in a “hallucinatory state.”⁽¹⁰⁾ A Colorado teen ate one serving of a marijuana-infused cookie—1/6 of a cookie. After 30 to 60 minutes he didn't feel anything, so he ate the rest of the cookie. After the effects of the drugs kicked in, he jumped off a 4th floor balcony and died from the fall.⁽¹¹⁾



VAPING

Vaping marijuana is done by placing raw cannabis or THC oil in a vaporizer or e-cigarette. While there are claims that this is a “healthier” way to consume marijuana, the effects of vaporizers and e-cigarettes have not been fully researched in large-scale studies.

STREET NAMES

MARIJUANA

Pot	Astro Yurf	Roach
Herb	Bhang	Puff
Weed	Dagga	Texas Tea
Buds	Dope	
Blaze	Hemp	
Grass	Home Grown	
White Widow	J	
Ganja	Mary Jane	
Dry High	Reefer	

HASHISH

Chocolate
Hash
Shit

TERMS FOR THE AMOUNT

Lid: an ounce or less

Matchbox: a small amount that usually comes in a cardboard matchbox

Nickel bag: a small bag that sells for \$5

Dime bag: a small bag that sells for \$10

Quarter: a quarter ounce

Brick: 2.2 pounds or one kilogram of tightly compacted marijuana⁽¹²⁾

HOW MARIJUANA HAS CHANGED OVER TIME

The Indian hemp plant (from which cannabis drugs like marijuana and hashish are made) was grown for use as a hallucinogen more than 2,000 years ago.

The amount of THC in the hemp plant determines the strength of the drug. The amount of THC found in marijuana is not consistent, and the level of THC has increased steadily.

By using modern techniques, hemp growers have developed types of cannabis that have much higher levels of THC than in the past. The average strength of the marijuana plant in the U.S. today is around 15–20%.

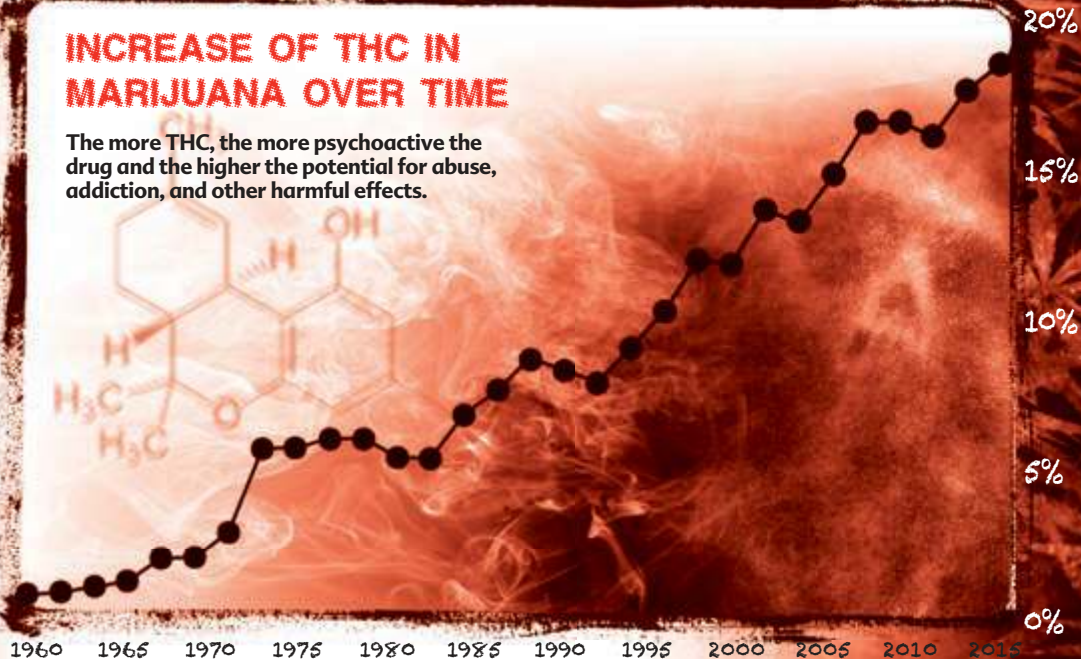
The highest level found in the plant is around 32%.⁽¹²⁾

For comparison:

- The pot smoked at Woodstock in 1969 and through the late 1970s contained roughly 1% THC.⁽¹³⁾
- In 1980, it was about 1%. By 1997, the average THC content was close to 5.1%; in 2008, 10.2%.⁽¹⁴⁾

INCREASE OF THC IN MARIJUANA OVER TIME

The more THC, the more psychoactive the drug and the higher the potential for abuse, addiction, and other harmful effects.



ALCOHOL VS. MARIJUANA

Is smoking
a joint
the same
as drinking
alcohol?

You decide. Here
are the facts:

Alcohol consists of
one substance only: ethanol.

Marijuana contains more than 400
known chemicals, including the same
cancer-causing substances found in tobacco
smoke. Unlike cigarette smokers, pot smokers
tend to inhale deeply and hold the smoke as

long as possible to increase the effect of the
drug, worsening the damage to the lungs.

Alcohol is eliminated from the body in a few
hours, but THC stays in the body for weeks,
possibly months, depending on the length and
intensity of usage.

THC damages the immune system. Alcohol
does not.

There is no intention here to minimize the
dangers of alcohol abuse, which can be
equally harmful. Users, however, need to be
aware that the chemicals in marijuana, some
of them cancer-causing, remain in the body
long after the drug is taken.

IS MARIJUANA MEDICINE?

Components of the marijuana plant may have medicinal properties. That is not the same as “medicine.” Medicine is made when a laboratory extracts the medicinal compound, standardizes it (meaning that it will do the same thing every time), and doses it (a standardized amount the doctor prescribes).

The term “medical marijuana” is often applied to the whole unprocessed marijuana plant or its crude extracts, which are not recognized or approved as medicine by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for any illness.⁽¹⁶⁾

Because marijuana is sometimes marketed as a medicine, perception of the drug has changed. But the basic facts about marijuana haven’t changed just because it’s marketed as a “medicine.” And while the debate over legalization presses on, legal does not equal safe. Cigarettes are legal but there is no debate about the fact that smoking is a health risk. Alcohol is legal but look at the number of people battling alcohol addiction or illnesses associated with alcohol abuse.

MARIJUANA AFFECTS DRIVING:

The use of marijuana significantly impairs judgment, coordination and reaction time—all skills needed to drive safely. Marijuana is the second most commonly psychoactive substance found among drivers after alcohol.⁽¹⁷⁾

Marijuana users are 3 to 7 times more likely to have a car crash.⁽¹⁷⁾

Driving under the influence of cannabis is associated with a 92% increased risk of vehicular crashes. Important is the fact that such driving was associated with a 110% increase in fatal crashes.⁽¹⁸⁾



- AAA reported that in the U.S. cannabis-involved fatalities increased from 8% in 2013 to 17% in 2014.⁽¹⁹⁾

- In Colorado, marijuana use increased significantly starting in 2009, and a study found that the proportion of drivers in fatal car crashes in Colorado testing positive for marijuana had risen

from 5.9% in 2009 to 10% in 2011.⁽²⁰⁾

- In the state of Washington, fatal driving accidents have risen 122% between 2010 and 2014.⁽²¹⁾

- In California, the percentage of drivers testing positive for marijuana that were involved in fatal car crashes rose from 9% in 2005 to 16.5% in 2014.⁽²¹⁾

THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA

The immediate effects of taking marijuana include rapid heart beat, disorientation, lack of physical coordination, often followed by depression or sleepiness. Some users suffer panic attacks or anxiety.⁽²²⁾

But the problem does not end there. According to scientific studies, the active ingredient in cannabis, THC, remains in the body for weeks or even months.⁽²³⁾


Marijuana smoke contains 50% to 70% more cancer-causing substances than tobacco smoke.⁽²⁴⁾ One major research study reported that a single cannabis joint could cause as much damage to the lungs as up to five regular cigarettes smoked one after another.⁽⁴⁾ Long-time joint smokers often

suffer from bronchitis, an inflammation of the respiratory tract.⁽²⁵⁾

The drug can affect more than your physical health. Studies in Australia in 2008 linked years of heavy marijuana use to brain abnormalities.⁽²⁶⁾ This is backed up by earlier research on the long-term effects of marijuana, which indicate changes in the brain similar to those caused by long-term abuse of other major drugs. And a number of studies have shown a connection between continued marijuana use and psychosis.⁽²⁷⁾

Marijuana can change the structure of sperm cells, deforming them.





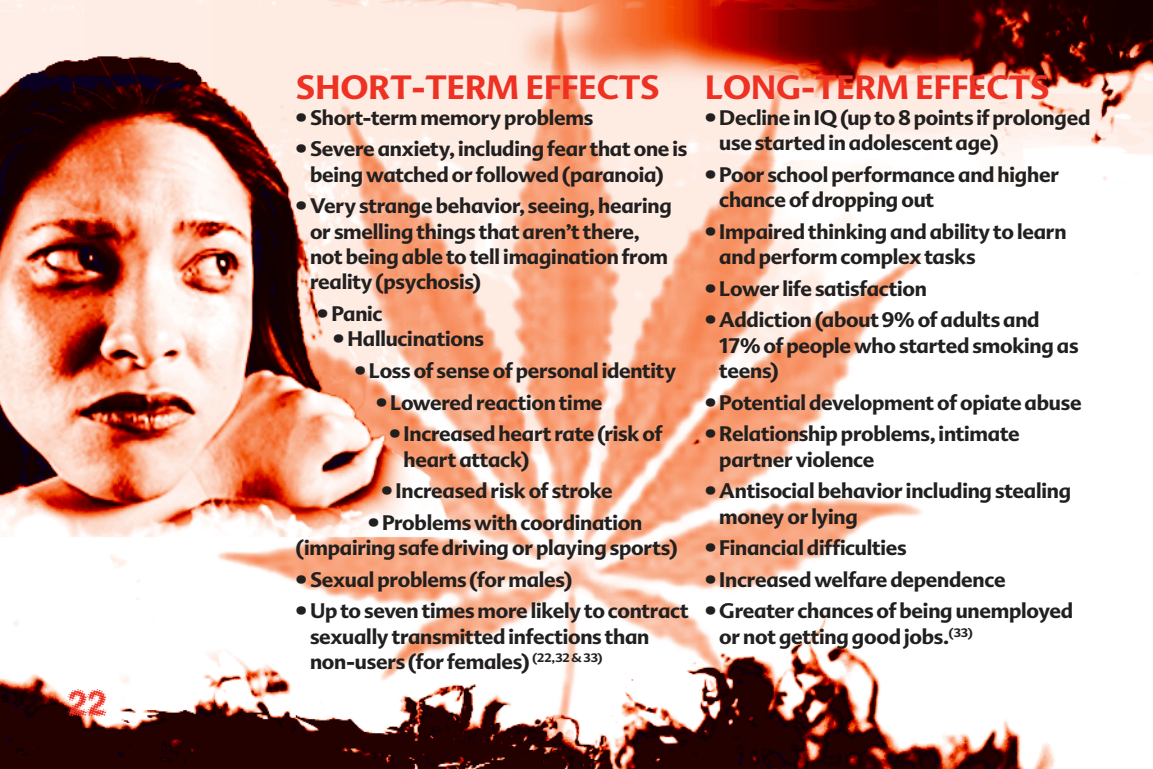
Thus even small amounts of marijuana can cause temporary sterility in men.⁽²⁸⁾ Marijuana use can also disrupt a woman's menstrual cycle.⁽²⁹⁾

Studies show that the mental functions of people who have smoked a lot of marijuana tend to be diminished. The THC in cannabis disrupts nerve cells in the brain, affecting memory.⁽³⁰⁾

Cannabis is one of the few drugs that causes abnormal cell division, which leads to severe hereditary defects. A pregnant woman who regularly smokes marijuana or hashish may give birth prematurely to an undersized, underweight baby. Over the last 10 years

many children of marijuana users have been born with reduced initiative and lessened abilities to concentrate and pursue life goals.⁽³¹⁾

Studies also suggest that prenatal (before birth) use of the drug may result in birth defects, mental abnormalities and increased risk of leukemia (cancer of the bone marrow) in children.⁽³¹⁾

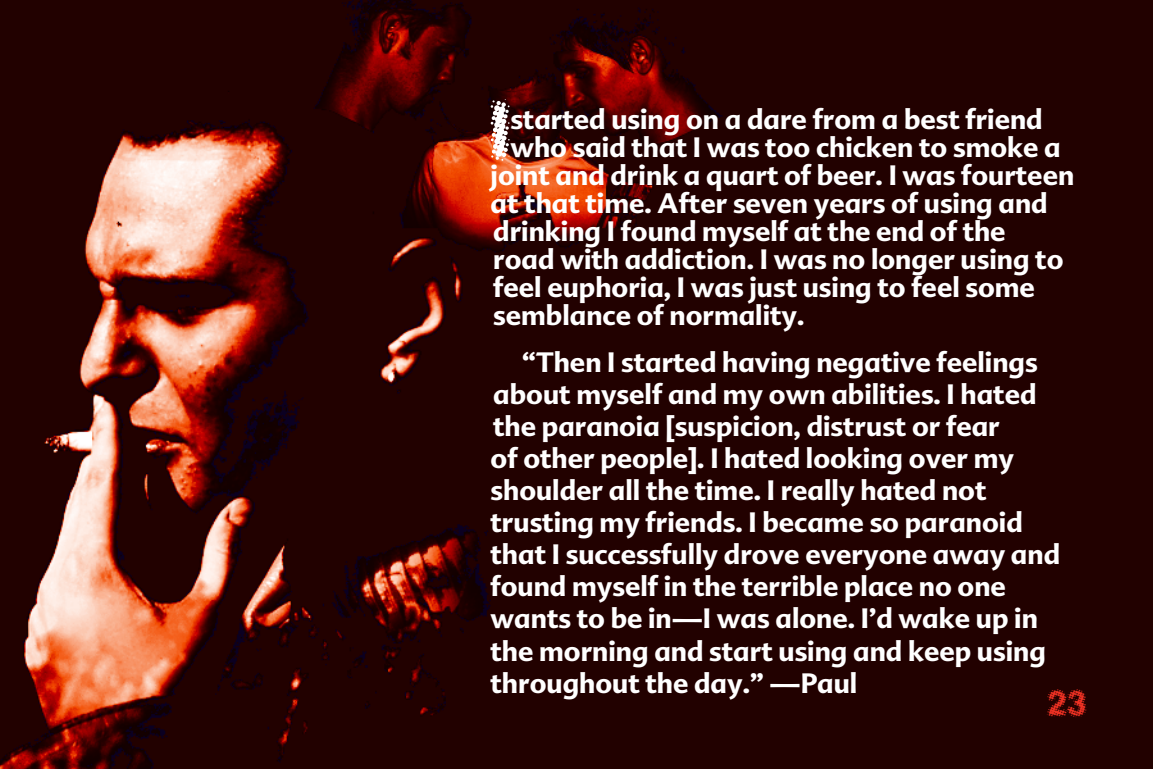


SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

- Short-term memory problems
- Severe anxiety, including fear that one is being watched or followed (paranoia)
- Very strange behavior, seeing, hearing or smelling things that aren't there, not being able to tell imagination from reality (psychosis)
- Panic
- Hallucinations
- Loss of sense of personal identity
- Lowered reaction time
- Increased heart rate (risk of heart attack)
- Increased risk of stroke
- Problems with coordination (impairing safe driving or playing sports)
- Sexual problems (for males)
- Up to seven times more likely to contract sexually transmitted infections than non-users (for females) ^(22,32 & 33)

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- Decline in IQ (up to 8 points if prolonged use started in adolescent age)
- Poor school performance and higher chance of dropping out
- Impaired thinking and ability to learn and perform complex tasks
- Lower life satisfaction
- Addiction (about 9% of adults and 17% of people who started smoking as teens)
- Potential development of opiate abuse
- Relationship problems, intimate partner violence
- Antisocial behavior including stealing money or lying
- Financial difficulties
- Increased welfare dependence
- Greater chances of being unemployed or not getting good jobs. ⁽³³⁾

A man in profile, looking down, with a cigarette in his mouth. In the background, another person's hand is resting on his shoulder. The scene is dimly lit with a warm, reddish-orange glow.

I started using on a dare from a best friend who said that I was too chicken to smoke a joint and drink a quart of beer. I was fourteen at that time. After seven years of using and drinking I found myself at the end of the road with addiction. I was no longer using to feel euphoria, I was just using to feel some semblance of normality.

“Then I started having negative feelings about myself and my own abilities. I hated the paranoia [suspicion, distrust or fear of other people]. I hated looking over my shoulder all the time. I really hated not trusting my friends. I became so paranoid that I successfully drove everyone away and found myself in the terrible place no one wants to be in—I was alone. I’d wake up in the morning and start using and keep using throughout the day.” —Paul

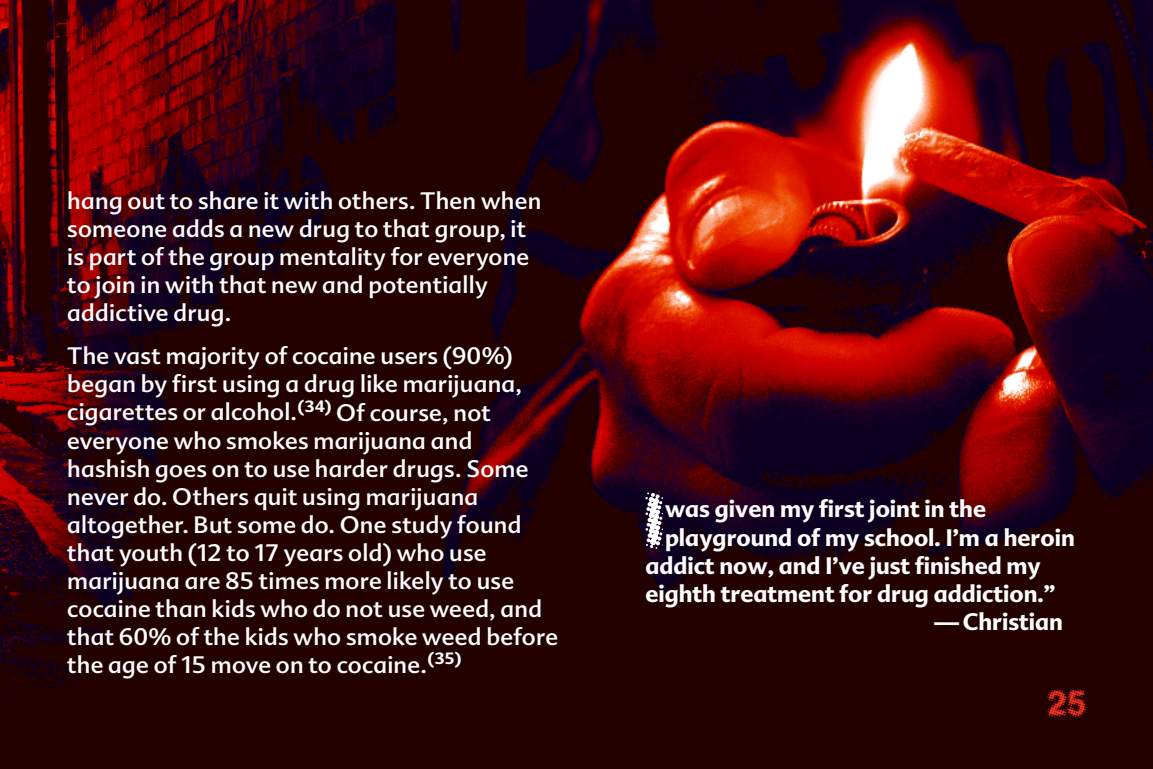


ON THE ROAD TO DRUG ABUSE

A recreational user takes marijuana for the effect it creates and the high or buzz they want to get from it. Continued use builds up tolerance and can lead users to consume stronger drugs to achieve the same high. When the effects start to wear off, the person may turn to more potent drugs to rid himself of the unwanted conditions that caused him to take marijuana in the first place. Marijuana itself does not lead the person to the other drugs.

People take drugs to get rid of unwanted situations or feelings. Marijuana masks the problem for a time (while the user is high). When the “high” fades, the problem, unwanted condition or situation returns more intensely than before. The user may then turn to stronger drugs since marijuana no longer “works.”

There is also the fact that marijuana users commonly group together at parties or just



hang out to share it with others. Then when someone adds a new drug to that group, it is part of the group mentality for everyone to join in with that new and potentially addictive drug.

The vast majority of cocaine users (90%) began by first using a drug like marijuana, cigarettes or alcohol.⁽³⁴⁾ Of course, not everyone who smokes marijuana and hashish goes on to use harder drugs. Some never do. Others quit using marijuana altogether. But some do. One study found that youth (12 to 17 years old) who use marijuana are 85 times more likely to use cocaine than kids who do not use weed, and that 60% of the kids who smoke weed before the age of 15 move on to cocaine.⁽³⁵⁾

I was given my first joint in the playground of my school. I'm a heroin addict now, and I've just finished my eighth treatment for drug addiction."

— Christian

A person with long, dark hair in braids is shown from the chest up, leaning over a large, ornate bong. They are inhaling from the long, vertical stem of the bong. The scene is lit with a warm, reddish-orange glow, creating a moody atmosphere. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting.

BEHIND THE SMOKE SCREEN

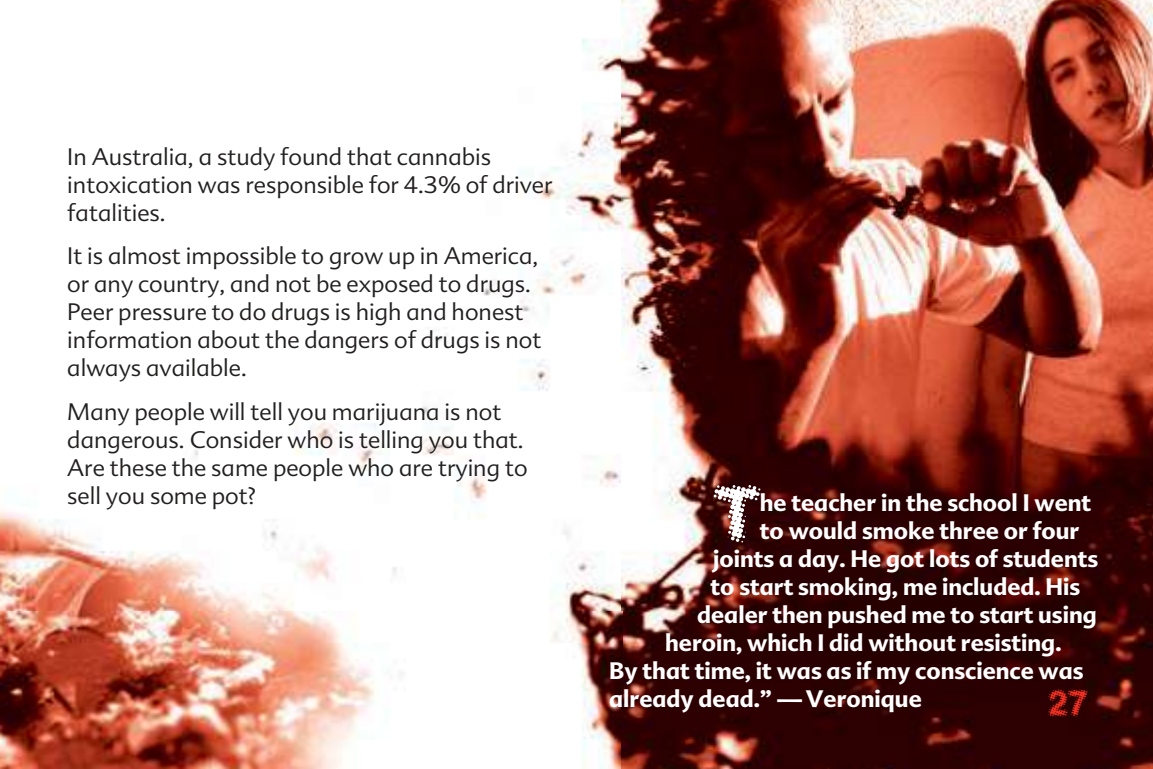
The use of marijuana is not only harmful to the pot smoker himself. He can also become a risk to society.

Research clearly shows that marijuana has the potential to cause problems in daily life. A study of 129 college students found that, among those who smoked the drug at least 27 of the 30 days before being surveyed, critical skills related to attention, memory, and learning were seriously diminished. A study of postal workers found that employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more accidents, 85% more injuries and a 75% increase in being absent from work.


In Australia, a study found that cannabis intoxication was responsible for 4.3% of driver fatalities.

It is almost impossible to grow up in America, or any country, and not be exposed to drugs. Peer pressure to do drugs is high and honest information about the dangers of drugs is not always available.

Many people will tell you marijuana is not dangerous. Consider who is telling you that. Are these the same people who are trying to sell you some pot?



The teacher in the school I went to would smoke three or four joints a day. He got lots of students to start smoking, me included. His dealer then pushed me to start using heroin, which I did without resisting. By that time, it was as if my conscience was already dead.” — Veronique

A close-up, high-angle shot of a person with long hair and glasses, wearing a dark shirt, smoking a cigarette. The person's face is partially obscured by shadows and the smoke from the cigarette. The background is a blurred field of green plants, likely marijuana, under bright, natural light. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, golden-brown and green tones.

Marijuana can harm a person's memory—and this impact can last for days or weeks after the immediate effects of the drug wear off. In one study, a group of heavy marijuana users was asked to recall words from a list. Their ability to correctly remember the words did not return to normal until as long as four weeks after they stopped smoking.⁽³⁹⁾

Students who use marijuana have lower grades and are less likely to get into college than non-smokers. They simply do not have the same abilities to remember and organize information compared to those who do not use these substances.

WHAT DEALERS WILL TELL YOU

When teens were surveyed to find out why they started using drugs in the first place, 55% replied that it was due to pressure from their friends. They wanted to be cool and popular. Dealers know this.

They will approach you as a friend and offer to “help you out” with “something to bring you up.” The drug will “help you fit in” or “make you cool.”

Drug dealers, motivated by the profits they make, will say anything to

get you to buy their drugs. They will tell you that “weed won’t lead you to harder drugs.”

They don’t care if the drugs ruin your life as long as they are getting paid. All they care about is money. Former dealers have admitted they saw their buyers as “pawns in a chess game.”

Get the facts about drugs. Make your own decisions.

The Truth About Drugs

A sunset over a body of water with two people standing on a rock in the foreground. The scene is bathed in a warm, orange-red glow from the setting sun, which is visible on the right side of the frame. The water shows gentle ripples, and the two figures are silhouetted against the bright background.

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate, and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones with the unwanted. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up or slow down or change something about the way your body is working, to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something in their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To seem grown up
- To escape or relax
- To rebel
- To relieve boredom
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, the drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and not to take drugs in the first place.

The real answer is to get the facts and not to take drugs in the first place.

REFERENCES

For the numbered references in this booklet, please contact the Foundation for a Drug-Free World.

PHOTO CREDITS: Page 20, 22: Alamy.

Millions of copies of booklets such as this have been distributed to people around the world in 22 languages. As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

The booklets are published by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, a nonprofit public benefit organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

The Foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for its international drug prevention network. It works with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organizations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.

FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This booklet is one in a series of publications that cover the facts about marijuana, alcohol, synthetic drugs, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.



For more information or to obtain more copies of this or other booklets in this series, contact:

Foundation for a Drug-Free World
1626 N. Wilcox Avenue, #1297
Los Angeles, CA 90028 USA

drugfreeworld.org • e-mail: info@drugfreeworld.org
Phone: 1-888 NOTODRUGS (1-888-668-6378)