



THE HEADLINE MAKERS

Marijuana is the dried leaves and tops of the cannabis plant, which contains THC. THC is a drug found in the cannabis plant that produces psychoactive effects. THC is a fat-soluble drug that settles and builds up in the fatty parts of the body, including the brain, heart and liver. Marijuana usually is smoked or eaten.

Marijuana is also known as:

Chronic	Ganja	Grass
Herb	Mary Jane	Pot
Reefer	Tea	Weed

Did You Know?

- Marijuana is the most frequently used illicit drug in America.
- The average potency of marijuana has increased since the '70's. (Sinsemilla)
- Cannabis has some of the same effects as depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens.
- Marijuana can be especially dangerous for youth and individuals with heart conditions, high blood pressure, epilepsy or schizophrenia, or people with emotional problems.
- Marijuana cigarettes yield almost four times as much tar as tobacco, creating high risk of lung damage.
- Marijuana can harm a developing fetus.

The term marijuana refers to the cannabis plant and to any part or extract of it that produces somatic or psychic changes. All parts of the cannabis plant contains THC. This is the major psychoactive ingredient in marijuana. In the past few years through increasing sophistication marijuana is an extremely potent material.

Pharmacological Effects

When marijuana is smoked, the effects are felt within minutes, reach their peak in 10 to 30 minutes, and may linger for 2 to 3 hours. When eaten, the onset is more slowly felt – 30 to 60 minutes after consumption, reaching a peak in about 2 to 3 hours. Nausea or vomiting are more likely in oral administration.

Marijuana has the effects on the central nervous system as a depressant, a stimulant and a hallucinogen. The effects depend on the potency, dosage and method of administration. Low to moderate doses can produce feelings of well-being, relaxation and drowsiness, or panic and anxiety. The results can impair speech, thinking, short-term memory, physical coordination, and balance. Since the effects of marijuana are so unpredictable, users should be aware of possible adverse reactions.

Marijuana can also cause:

1. Increased heart rate
2. Reddening of the eyes and reduction of ocular pressure
3. Dryness of mouth and throat
4. Increased body temperature
5. A slight drop in blood pressure when standing
6. Increased hunger
7. Bursts of spontaneous laughter
8. Drowsiness

What Does It Look Like?

Marijuana looks like dried parsley mixed with stems and seeds, and is most commonly smoked in cigarettes, pipe or water pipe.

The resin of hashish varies in color from light brown to black and is pressed into cakes, slabs, or balls. It can be eaten or smoked.

Long-Term Effects

Marijuana is a physically and psychologically addictive drug, and those who use it regularly build up a tolerance so that increasingly greater doses are needed to obtain the same effects. Marijuana users ingest almost four times as much tar as tobacco smokers.

The smoke from marijuana shares many characteristics with tobacco smoke and present similar dangers. A comparison of the tars from both drugs has shown that when smoked the same way, marijuana produces more than twice as much tar as a popular brand of cigarettes and when inhaled deeply and exhaled slowly—as is the usual way to smoke this drug—yields four times more tar. Inflammation and other abnormalities in the lungs of marijuana smokers have led to warnings that heavy users are at risk for chronic asthma, bronchitis, or emphysema.

There is little question that marijuana use interferes with complex mental functioning as well as with skilled performance including driving or piloting a plane. There is even the possibility that marijuana use changes the structure of the brain and persistent changes in brain function. Transient-paranoid feelings are common. Acute problems involve disorientation, confusion and memory impairment. Cannabis psychosis resembles schizophrenia. This illness is characterized by confusion, aggressiveness and instability of moods. There is also the loss of conventional motivation and an inability to persist in achieving long-term goals—a so called amotivational syndrome.

Chronic marijuana use can lower sperm counts in males and may affect menstrual cycles and ovulation in females. *There is also the potential of genetic damage.*

The Risks Involve:

- Brain damage
- Cancer
- Damage to the immune system
- Damage to the male and female reproductive systems
- Heart disease
- Impaired psychological functioning
- Lung damage
- Prolonged memory/concentration problems
- Serious problems with motivation and performance at work or school
- Upper respiratory problems

Using Marijuana Leads to Accidents!

Each year, over 80,000 people go to emergency rooms because of marijuana use.

Marijuana is illegal. Over 700,000 people are arrested for having or selling marijuana each year.

Who Uses Marijuana?

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug in America and tends to be the first illegal drug teens use. However, 69.3% of high school seniors when surveyed said they did not use. Additionally, most marijuana users do not go on to use other illegal drugs.

Historically, hemp fibers were used to make rags, textiles and fine paper. The seeds have been added to birdseed and exploited for their oil. The Chinese used Indian hemp pharmaceutically as early as 2700 B.C. Since then, marijuana has been used worldwide for medical and intoxicating purposes.

Recreational use of marijuana became widespread in the United States in the 1960s. It is the most frequently used illicit drug in our nation. Persons of many ages, backgrounds, races and nationalities in America use marijuana. It is important to remember that biological, psychological, demographic, economic and cultural factors influence people's use of drugs.

Individuals of all ages used marijuana. Thirty seven percent of United States residents 12 and older used marijuana at least once in their lifetime according to a recent study. The survey also revealed that a significant percentage of teenagers and young adults use marijuana – 50% of those aged 18 to 25.

Marijuana use among high school students is a particular problem. Nearly half of high school seniors in the United States used the drug in their lifetime.

What to Look For

Occasional use is difficult to detect, although marijuana has a distinctive smell which may remain in clothing and hair. Regular users often have chronic hacking coughs or reddened eyes. They may complain of a dry mouth and throat. Many users report problems swallowing and say their tongues, mouths and throats feel numb.

The following signs and symptoms may indicate marijuana use:

- Low tolerance for frustration and defiant, rebellious behavior
- Poor impulse control and unpredictable, wide-spread mood swings, including sudden outbursts of anger, crying or laughter and depression
- Confused thinking – some users cannot remember what they did yesterday
- Inappropriate responses to authority figures
- Taking advantage of others and constant lying
- Poor performance on the job or in school
- Lateness and absenteeism at work and school
- Loss of interest in family and healthy, social activities
- Brushes with the law for driving violations, vandalism, fighting and shoplifting

Marijuana Dependence

Dependence occurs when the user relies on the drug to cope with daily life and cannot function confidently without it. In the beginning, marijuana provides pleasure and makes the user feel good. The desire to repeat this pleasant feeling prompts continued use. Soon, the user turns to marijuana out of boredom, anxiety and uncertainty.

Marijuana use becomes so compelling that family, friends and other positive activities begin to lose their importance. Users feel upset, depressed and anxious and may have problems sleeping when they try to stop using. With few exceptions, anyone who uses marijuana regularly can become dependent on it.

What To Do

- Users must first recognize their dependency on the drug.
- They must make a commitment to stop.
- Some users may need support to become drug-free.

Did You Know?

1. Know the law. Marijuana is an illegal substance. You can face a heavy-duty fine and jail time.
2. You do not function normally and cannot do things which require concentration under the influence of marijuana.
3. Marijuana can increase the risk of infertility.
4. Using marijuana increase the risk of car crashes, falls, burns, drowning and suicide.
5. Do the smart thing, using marijuana puts your health, education, family ties and social life at risk.
6. Face your problems. Using marijuana won't help you escape your problems, it will only create more.
7. If you know someone with a drug problem, be a part of the solution.

***Know the Facts. Know the Risks.
Don't Use Marijuana***