

Facts About Marijuana for Health Curriculum –

With legalization there is less perceived risk. Not so.

Health Risks:

- **Dangerous Behavior:**
Marijuana impairs your ability to think normally. This state of impairment increases risk both physically and through impaired judgment.

- **Gateway Drug:**
Using marijuana can increase the probability of using other more dangerous drugs. Impairment in judgment may also cause users to be more susceptible to trying other drugs. Statistically most users of heavy drugs started using marijuana.

- **Burnout:**
With prolonged use, the body builds up and carries what is clinically termed a “burden” of marijuana. Mental and physical changes occur resulting in a deadened response to normal stimuli. Some researchers have termed this “amotivational syndrome.” While adult users may be less susceptible to this behavior, it is readily evident in adolescents and young adults. It often results in trouble focusing and participating in schoolwork and other normal activities necessary to adolescent social and academic development.

- **Memory, Attention, Learning:**
Early and continued use can negatively affect memory, attention span, ability to think clearly, concentration, learning and retaining new things resulting in poor school performance, increased risk of falling behind and dropping out of school.

- **Loss of Intelligence/Potential:**
Regular use as an adolescent causes scientific changes to happen in the developing brain, which can result in permanent loss of IQ.

- **Mental Health Issues:**
Use of marijuana as an adolescent can cause psychological developmental issues and in some cases, long term mental health issues. Recent studies in Israel have shown that using marijuana as an adolescent can trigger schizophrenia. Marijuana use also prevents adolescent users from dealing with mental health issues in a healthy way. The use of marijuana can sometimes cause troubled thinking and trigger depression, feelings of hopelessness and apathy. If a person is already troubled, using marijuana can seem like a way to self-medicate, but it actually pushes you farther from reality and finding long-term solutions to mental health problems. Marijuana use can also trigger psychotic episodes or trigger a latent mental illness.

- **Lung Disease/Cancer:**

Any smoke (caused by cigarettes, joints, pipes, vaping) inhaled into the lungs is unhealthy and can potentially cause lung disease or even cancer.

- **Problematic Behavior:**
Using marijuana at an early age is also linked to risk taking behavior such as:
 - Immature sexual activity, which can result in unplanned pregnancy.
 - Increased risk of driving under the influence of marijuana, which more than doubles your risk of an accident.
 - Higher levels of criminal behavior.
 - Higher levels of leaving the family home early.

Other Issues –

- **Purity:**
The marijuana of today contains almost 10% THC, the active ingredient in the drug. This is many times higher than the marijuana of previous generations.
- **Mixing Drugs:**
Many adolescent users do not take into account the reaction of mixing drugs like marijuana and alcohol and/or other drugs. Using marijuana and alcohol together greatly increases the risk of accidents due to impaired judgment, impaired spatial recognition, and increased risk-taking behavior.
- **Legal Problems:**
Adolescents caught using marijuana underage (21) are subject to MIPs (Minor In Possession). This also includes any paraphernalia found on their person or property. MIPs can lead to suspension, expulsion, ejection from academic or athletic activities, loss of scholarships, loss of trust, prolonged legal repercussions like probation, and/or juvenile detention.

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