

SKUNK ALERT!

(aka Potent Pot)

BRAIN DAMAGE. PSYCHOSIS. ADDICTION.

What every teacher, parent and student should know about marijuana.

MARIJUANA IS NOT SAFER THAN ALCOHOL. Unlike alcohol which consists of one chemical that is excreted from the body in a matter of hours, marijuana is fat-soluble, one half of which stays in the body and brain for a month, compounding with each additional joint; longer than any other drug. It consists of 483 chemicals that turn into over 2,000 when smoked, and 61 cannabinoids all of which are bioactive and some are psychoactive. The main psychoactive drug is THC (delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol). The THC content of marijuana has increased from 1/2 to 2% in the 60's and 70's to as high as 40% in smoked form, and 95% as wax or BHO (Butane Hash Oil). While alcohol in moderation can even be beneficial, as with a glass or two of wine, today's high potency pot, called Skunk, is primarily consumed just to get high, and with it are many serious harms to adolescent brains.

MARIJUANA CAN CAUSE PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE by physically altering the brain before it reaches full maturity at or about age 25. Marijuana reduces the amount of white and grey matter by as much as 80% (*Seal, Melbourne U*) and shrinks the hippocampus, the learning, cognition and memory center of the brain causing a loss of 6 to 8 points of IQ by age 38 (*teens.drugabuse.org*). The damage is age and dose related. The younger one starts and the more they use the greater the toxic effect on the brain. Quitting later doesn't reverse the damage. Adolescent marijuana use diminishes academic achievement, leads to more dropouts, less life satisfaction and fewer opportunities for higher paying jobs. (*John Walters, former Drug Czar*) Parents should be aware that there is a huge difference between an adolescent and a mature brain. Brain damage during adolescence can have life-long adverse consequences.

MARIJUANA IS NOT MEDICINE While isolated components of the plant, like CBD, appear to have therapeutic value for certain illnesses, and marijuana has some value in suppressing vomiting and nausea and stimulating appetite in AIDS patients, the whole plant is classified by the FDA as a Schedule I drug because it has no accepted medicinal use, has the potential for harm, and cannot be administered properly under supervision. Real medicines must have known compounds, potency and dosage and be reproducible in a uniform manner (like pills). That isn't possible with smoke, and the consistency of marijuana plants varies widely, often with fungus, mold and insecticides that are very harmful. The term "medical marijuana" was coined by people who want to legalize drugs to give it a good name as a first step toward full legalization. Cannabidiol (CBD), the component that can help offset the psychoactive effects of THC, has been largely bred out of today's marijuana being sold as medicine, as "patients" just want to get high. Synthetic THC has been produced in pill form called Marinol, and is legally available through pharmacies.

MARIJUANA CAN CAUSE MENTAL ILLNESS In vulnerable individuals (about 30%) it has and is causing psychotic breaks leading to violent acts, mass murders and suicides, as well as other mental health disorders including schizophrenia, paranoia, anxiety, depression and bi-polar disease. The problem is people don't know they are vulnerable until they experience the problem, then it may be too late for some and a question of long term recovery for others. Psychotic episodes have led to a dramatic increase in emergency room visits. Daily users are 5 times more likely to develop mental health disorders; weekend users 3 times more than non-users. Research by psychiatrists in inner-city areas speak of cannabis being a factor in up to 80 percent of schizophrenia cases. (*Schizophrenia.com – Campbell*)



MARIJUANA IS ADDICTIVE One in six (17%) of adolescents who use marijuana will become addicted; one in eleven (9%) of those who start after age 18 (*National Institute of Drug Abuse*). Recovery from marijuana addiction is particularly difficult because it remains in the body for so long. Marijuana is a gateway to other drugs that kill by overdose, such as heroin, cocaine and meth. Of 120 Americans who die every day of drug overdose, roughly 90% started their drug journey with pot. Addiction will ruin the addict's life, and all those in the circle of family and friends.

MARIJUANA CAN KILL OR PERMANENTLY HARM A FETUS Today's high potency pot can cause fatal brain damage to a fetus only two weeks after conception, before the mother even knows she is pregnant. (*Psychoyos, U of Texas*). Research from 40 years ago (*UC Davis Primate Center Sassenrath*) when the potency of pot was a fraction of today's pot, showed an increase in still births from 12% normal to 44%. Babies that survived child birth often had physical deformities and brain alterations that altered behavior and caused learning deficits well into the teens. Babies of mothers who smoked pot during pregnancy had an 11 fold increase in nonlumphobiastic leukemia. (*Reece – U of Queensland*) Young people approaching or in their child bearing years should be acutely aware that marijuana use at conception, during pregnancy and/or when breast feeding can directly affect a baby when they are most vulnerable.

MARIJUANA CAUSES HEALTH PROBLEMS INCLUDING CANCER Marijuana can cause cancer of the head, neck, bladder, brain and testis; cause chronic bronchitis and other respiratory problems and elevates the risk of heart attack by 4.8 times within 1 to 3 hours after smoking. (NIDA) Recent studies show that it is a major cause of strokes as well. (*American Stroke Assoc Int'l – Feb 2013*) It affects the pituitary gland, a pea size structure at the base of the brain that is the control center for sex and reproductive hormones and in turn, sexual dysfunction. (Dr. David Goodwin, Studies done long ago showed that marijuana caused more DNA damage than even heroin (*Miroshima*), resulting in mutations to sperm and chromosomal abnormalities that can affect future generations. Because marijuana attaches to the fatty exterior of all cells, it blocks healthy proteins and weakens one's immune system. (*Dr. Nicholas Pace, Founder Am Council on Marijuana*).

MARIJUANA DOUBLES THE RISK OF TRAFFIC DEATHS Traffic deaths have doubled where marijuana has been legalized. In a Maryland Trauma Center, 27% of injured drivers tested positive for pot and 50% of drivers under 21 tested positive for pot compared to only 33% for alcohol. (*DuPont, www.IBHinc.org*) Intoxication from either alcohol or marijuana are a major cause of injury traffic accidents; mixing the two is particularly dangerous. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death of teenagers. Don't drive or ride with anyone who uses pot.

MARIJUANA IS WORSE THAN TOBACCO The long term effects of smoking tobacco lead to illnesses that claim 480,000 lives a year, so the harms of tobacco cannot be minimized. However, for all of the reasons cited above regarding brain damage and loss of IQ, impaired memory and motivation, mental illness, driver safety, depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, and myriad health problems, the short term harms are far worse, with lasting impacts. What is worse, more teens are smoking pot today than tobacco, and in many cases concealing it by vaping, which don't emit smoke or an odor. Random or suspicion based drug testing can be used for early identification of a problem, and as a deterrent. Hair analysis in particular, with a 90 day window of detection, is highly recommended, albeit urine and saliva should be used as well. The intent is not to catch and punish, but to protect and keep kids in the system, safe and drug-free.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HARMS OR MARIJUANA

www.drugabuse.gov/publications
www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp
www.drugfree.org
www.teens.drugabuse.gov/drugfacts

www.dea.gov
www.nationalfamilies.org
www.TBAC.us/Editorials
www.poppot.org

www.ibhinc.org
www.CASAColumbia.org
www.CALMca.org
www.ifbc.us