

Cannabis 101

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUTH CANNABIS USE?

Modern weed is

200%

stronger than it was in the past^{8,9}

Today's cannabis plants contain much higher amounts of THC than even a few decades ago. Because of this, the effects are stronger and longer-lasting and can have a big impact on the teen brain during the sensitive time while it's growing.

WEED CAN AFFECT TEEN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

You might have laughed at your own parent's warning that "smoking weed kills brain cells," but research is starting to show just how vulnerable the brain is before we're in our mid-20s. Because teen brains are still growing, cannabis can negatively impact the parts of the brain responsible for memory formation, attention, coordination, and emotional regulation.

How can using cannabis affect teens?



- **It can impact school performance** by making it harder to learn, remember, and pay attention.¹



- **It can increase the risk of lung health problems** like chronic coughing, bronchitis, and asthma.²



- **It can affect the development of natural reflexes** and throw off coordination, balance, and reaction time.^{1,3}
- **Using as a teen can increase the risk of experiencing mental health challenges as an adult**, especially for those already at risk due to genetics.¹

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WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

IT MIGHT BE HARD TO BELIEVE AT TIMES, BUT YOU ARE THE NUMBER ONE INFLUENCE ON YOUR TEEN'S BEHAVIOR

Research shows that teens are less likely to try cannabis and illegal drugs when adults talk with them about the risks and harms of teen use.^{3,4} Parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, teachers, coaches, counselors, and faith leaders can all make a difference in a teen's choices. Even if they act like they're not paying attention, what you say and do matters and can have an impact. Being there for the youth in your life—and giving them real, science-based facts about cannabis—helps them make informed choices about using weed.

WHERE YOU CAN START

Prepare by learning the facts

Before getting into a conversation, it's important to get educated about teen weed use. Over the last 25 years, cannabis has more than tripled in potency,⁵ and the way it affects teens has changed too. Keep reading our toolkit to get up to speed on science-based facts that can help you and your teen understand the risks.

Talk with them before social media does

Most teens get their news from social media these days,⁶ but that can mean a whole lot of misinformation about cannabis. Hearing the facts from you before they're exposed to mixed messages from friends or influencers can help them understand the real risks of weed.

Keep the conversation going

As the youth in your life gets older, it's important to maintain an open dialogue with them about how THC affects their developing bodies, brains, and mental health. Continuing to talk with teens often can result in less cannabis use⁷ when they start making independent decisions.

Model safe and healthy behaviors

Even when it seems like they're ignoring you, teens get their cues from you. Be sure to use responsibly and practice safe storage by keeping cannabis products, alcohol, and other substances in a lockable, odor-proof container that's hidden out of reach and out of sight. Consider using a safe or lockbox with a combination lock and storing it in a high cabinet or locked drawer. You can buy stash bags at local and online cannabis retailers statewide.

Sources

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