

What You Need to Know About Youth & Cannabis

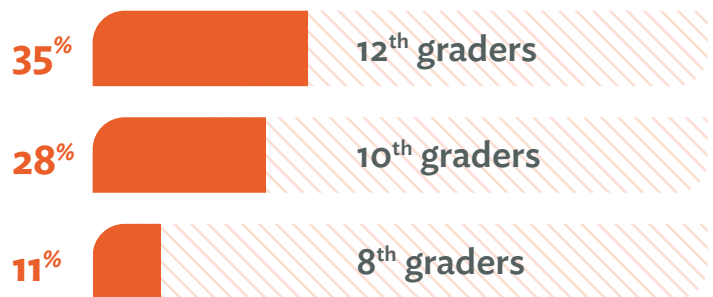
WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis (also called weed, pot, bud, or marijuana – see the [Drug Enforcement Administration's Report](#) for more street names) refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems and seeds of the cannabis plant.¹ The plant contains more than 100 different compounds, or cannabinoids, like tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).² THC is responsible for the impairing and psychoactive effects that temporarily change mood, thoughts and perceptions.³

HOW DO PEOPLE USE CANNABIS? WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT PRODUCTS?

Cannabis and oils and concentrates containing compounds from marijuana can be consumed in a variety of ways, including by smoking (e.g., joints, bowls, bongs, blunts), vaping (e.g., electronic vaporizing devices like e-cigarettes, vape pens), eating (e.g., cookies, chocolate, candies), drinking (e.g., soda, coffee, tinctures) and dabbing (e.g., through a dab rig).⁴ Currently, there is no evidence that any method of using cannabis is safer than another.⁴

HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE USE CANNABIS?



Prevalence of cannabis use among youth varies by state, but in 2020, at a national level, about 35% of 12th graders, 28% of 10th graders and 11% of 8th graders used cannabis in the past year.⁵ The prevalence of youth who report daily or near daily use is lower, with 7% of 12th graders, 4% of 10th graders and 1% of 8th graders reporting daily or near daily use.⁵ Past year cannabis use and daily or near daily cannabis use have been stable nationally for the past decade. Past year vaping of cannabis increased exponentially among 8th, 10th and 12th graders from 2017 to 2019, but remained steady in 2020, with 22% of 12th graders, 19% of 10th graders and 8% of 8th graders reporting that they vaped cannabis in the past year.⁵

HOW DOES CANNABIS AFFECT PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY?

How cannabis affects a person depends on several factors, including the amount of THC, the way it is ingested, how often it is used, the age of first use, a person's underlying medical conditions, and whether other substances like tobacco and alcohol are used at the same time.²

DOES CANNABIS AFFECT THE BRAIN?

Yes, cannabis use directly affects the brain – specifically parts of the brain that are responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision-making, coordination, emotions and reaction time.² When people begin using cannabis during their youth, especially at high levels, there is increased risk for impairments in brain development and attention, memory and learning cognition.² These deficits may be longlasting and can affect related outcomes like educational attainment, employment and income in young adulthood.²

WHAT ARE THE OTHER HEALTH EFFECTS OF CANNABIS?

In addition to effects on the brain, cannabis can impact physical and behavioral health.

Short-term use may lead to altered senses, distorted perception of time, mood changes, impaired coordination and difficulty with thinking, memory and problem-solving. High doses can cause hallucinations, delusions or acute psychosis.^{1,2}

Long-term, frequent cannabis use has been associated with a range of health concerns. These include an increased risk of psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia, particularly among individuals with a family history of psychosis. It has also been linked to depression, anxiety and a higher risk of suicidal thoughts, attempts and death. Smoking cannabis regularly can lead to chronic bronchitis and other harms to lung health, including inflammation and damage to airway tissues.^{1,2}

IS DRIVING AFTER USING CANNABIS SAFE?

No. Cannabis use can impair driving by slowing decision-making, distorting perception and reducing coordination and reaction time, increasing the risk of motor vehicle accidents and other injuries.^{1,2}

CAN CANNABIS BE ADDICTIVE?

Yes, research suggests approximately 30% of people who use cannabis have a cannabis use disorder.⁶ People who begin using cannabis before the age of 18 are more likely to develop a cannabis use disorder as adults.⁶ Signs that someone might be addicted to cannabis include:⁶

- Giving up important activities with friends and family in favor of using cannabis.
- Using cannabis even when it causes problems fulfilling everyday jobs at home, school or work.
- Needing more to get the same effect.
- Being unsuccessful in efforts to quit.

REFERENCES

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