
the **ASAP** News

-- **Tools you can use from the Adolescent Substance Abuse Program --**
Issue number 14 -- March 2006

Special focus of this Issue: **Marijuana**

The Truth About Marijuana

This issue focuses on **marijuana**. In Arizona, more youth abuse marijuana than any other drug. In fact, almost exactly 50% of Arizona's youth will at least try marijuana before they leave High School. Marijuana is falsely perceived by many as harmless, or nearly so. But the reality is many substance abuse treatment programs find that marijuana is the hardest drug to treat, as youth can be far more resistant to giving up marijuana than even "harder" drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin. Many parents are not opposing marijuana use as diligently as they are "harder" drugs, which complicates treatment and prevention efforts.

Given the seriousness of this drug, it is about time we got "real" about Marijuana.

Find the real story and the real truth about marijuana in this edition of the ASAP News.

Here are the Facts

Marijuana is a green, brown or gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers of the hemp plant. Marijuana is frequently called pot, herb, weed, grass, boom, Mary Jane, gangster, or chronic, but there are more than 200 known slang terms for marijuana. There are stronger forms of marijuana also, namely sinsemilla, hashish, and hash oil.

All the different forms of marijuana are mind-altering, that is, they change how the brain works. All forms of marijuana contain the active ingredient THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). The effect marijuana has depends directly on the potency of the THC it contains. The potency of common "marijuana cigarettes" commonly smoked in the US has increase dramatically since the 1970s (and stayed about the same since the 1980s.)

Smoking marijuana cigarettes remain the most common way the drug is used. These cigarettes are also called joints. More recently marijuana has appeared in cigars, called blunts.

The THC in marijuana is absorbed by fatty tissues in various organs in the human body. THC can be rather easily detected by urine drug testing several days after smoking. In heavy or chronic users marijuana use can be detected by urine drug testing weeks, sometimes many weeks, after use has ended.

The effects of the THC in marijuana typically depends on five factors: 1) How strong the marijuana is (that is, how much THC it has), 2) what the user expects to happen, 3) the place where marijuana is used, 4) how it is taken into the body, and 5) whether the user is simultaneously drinking alcohol or using other drugs.

Some people feel nothing when they smoke marijuana. Others feel relaxed or high. Some report that "everything is funnier." Some feel very hungry, an effect called "the munchies." Some users experience bad effects from marijuana use. In these persons sudden feelings of anxiety and paranoid thoughts can occur, effects that increase in likelihood with the more potent forms of marijuana.

The short-term effects of marijuana include: 1) impaired memory and learning, 2) perceptual distortions, 3) impaired thinking and problem-solving, 4) loss of coordination, and 5) anxiety and increased heart rate

The long-term effects of marijuana have also been amply demonstrated. Marijuana may play a role in some forms of cancer, respiratory system problems, and immune system dysfunction. Marijuana can contain even more of the cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke. Studies have shown that smoking only five joints per week may be equivalent to smoking a full pack of cigarettes per day. People who smoke marijuana often develop the same kinds of coughing and wheezing problems that cigarette smokers experience. Marijuana smokers also have more chest colds than nonsmokers, and they are at greater risk of lung infections and pneumonia. Studies in animals show that THC can damage the cells in the body that protect from disease, weakening the immune system.

It is often fairly easy to tell if someone has been using marijuana. Marijuana users can often: 1) seem dizzy and have trouble walking, 2) act silly and giggle for no apparent reason, 3) display red, bloodshot eyes, and 4) have difficulty remembering things that just happened.

Much talk had been made in recent years about the possible use of marijuana as a "medicine." Since 1970 federal law has made marijuana a Schedule 1 controlled substance. This means that marijuana has no accepted medical use. THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, can be manufactured into a pill form that can be used to treat the nausea that occurs as a side effect to cancer treatments. However, more research needs to be done on marijuana's side effects and potential benefits before it can be used medically with regularity and safety.

And finally, marijuana is addictive, both physically and psychologically addictive. Many youth (and adults) wrongly characterize marijuana as not addictive in order to justify their use.

SOURCE: NCADI, National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information

Can YOU pass the "Marijuana Quiz?"

The Marijuana Quiz consists of 15 multiple choice questions. Few, if any, persons get all 15 questions correct. Test yourself-- and those who might need the test or claim to be marijuana "experts."

1. What is the proper, biological name of marijuana?
 - a) Cannabis exotica
 - b) Cannabis sativa
 - c) Cannabis saliva
 - d) Cannabis punjata
2. What is the name of the active chemical in marijuana?
 - a) delta-9 ethanol dehydrogenase
 - b) delta-Fos-B
 - c) delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol
 - d) delta gamma
3. How long does it take for marijuana to reach peak levels in the brain?
 - a) 10 seconds
 - b) 90 seconds
 - c) 10 minutes
 - d) 90 minutes
4. How long after smoking marijuana are mental and physical abilities weakened?
 - a) one hour
 - b) three or four hours
 - c) Twelve to sixteen hours
 - d) Twenty-four hours
5. What percentage of teenagers try marijuana at least once before graduating from high school?
 - a) less than 10%
 - b) about 25%
 - c) less than 50%
 - d) almost 75%
 - e) over 90%
6. Which of the following statements is the most true?
 - a) Smoking marijuana has little effect on someone's ability to drive a car
 - b) Smoking marijuana is less damaging to someone's ability to drive a car than alcohol is
 - c) People who have been smoking marijuana do not have much trouble passing roadside tests
 - d) People who have been smoking marihuana have just as much trouble passing roadside sobriety tests as people who have been drinking
 - e) People who have been smoking marijuana have more trouble passing roadside sobriety tests than people who have been drinking
7. How does the risk of lung cancer for a marijuana smoker compare to a tobacco smoker's risk?
 - a) Marijuana causes little risk of lung cancer
 - b) Marijuana contains about 50% more of the cancer-causing chemical benzopyrene than tobacco
 - c) Marijuana contains about 50% less of the cancer-causing chemical benzopyrene than tobacco
 - d) Marijuana contains a larger number of cancer-causing chemicals in greater amounts than tobacco

8. THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, “mimics” which neurotransmitter in the brain?

- a) Anandamide
- b) Serotonin
- c) Dopamine
- d) Norepinephrine
- e) Epinephrine

9. Which of the following statements about THC is false?

- a) It interferes with the formation of short-term memory
- b) It gets in the way of coordinated movement
- c) It affects how the user integrates emotions with actions
- d) It stimulates, or speeds up, brain and body functions

10. Which of the following is NOT a short-term negative effect of marijuana use?

- a) Problems with memory and learning
- b) Inability to sleep
- c) Distorted sense of sight
- d) Elevated heart rate
- e) Increased risk of injury

11. Does marijuana deposit tar in the lungs, the way tobacco smoking does?

- a) No
- b) Yes, but somewhat less than tobacco
- c) Yes, about the same as tobacco
- d) Yes, about two times as much as tobacco
- e) Yes, about 5 times as much as tobacco

12. How does marijuana affect a male’s ability to father a child?

- a) It makes him impotent and sterile
- b) It kills most of the sperm cells in his body
- c) It decreases sperm count
- d) It decreases sperm count and makes abnormal sperm
- e) It has no effect on a male’s ability to father a child

13. What effect does marijuana NOT have when used during pregnancy?

- a) Increases miscarriage rate
- b) Causes severe facial and limb abnormalities
- c) Causes lower birth weight, leading to health problems
- d) May cause brain damage in the fetus

14. What is amotivational syndrome?

- a) Psychological addiction to using marijuana
- b) Loss of interest in goals and life outside of marijuana use
- c) Lack of sense of humor and creativity due to marijuana use
- d) Increase in aggression, anger, and violence due to marijuana use

15. Which of the following signs of addiction do not marijuana abusers NOT suffer?

- a) Advanced withdrawal symptoms: heavy sweating, racing heart, nausea, and dizziness
- b) Increased tolerance (the need for more and more to feel the same effect)
- c) Compulsive drug craving and drug seeking
- d) Continued use despite negative consequences in life

The Research Shows

Three recent research studies explode some myths about marijuana.

MYTH #1 -- "Marijuana is not addictive -- I can use it safely."

NIDA-supported research conducted by professionals at the University of Vermont has demonstrated that marijuana smokers that suddenly stop smoking can suffer withdrawal symptoms that appear as severe as those associated with tobacco smoking. Withdrawal-- a classic sign of addiction-- is becoming accepted as key aspect of chronic marijuana use. Withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, anger, depressed mood, headaches, restlessness, lack of appetite, and craving all can make it difficult to stop using marijuana. SOURCE -- NIDA NOTES Volume 17, Number 3

MYTH #2 -- "You can test positive from second-hand marijuana smoke without actually smoking yourself"

It is frequently claimed that a positive THC test can result from passive marijuana smoke inhalation (second-hand smoke). Repeated studies have consistently demonstrated that this is very unlikely. Many studies have shown no instance, not one, where passive inhalation of marijuana smoke, even under extreme conditions, cause urine specimens of non-marijuana users to test positive for THC using the common screening cutoff of 50ng/mL and 15ng/mL. SOURCE -- Drug Testing Quarterly

MYTH #3 -- "Marijuana is not really a gateway drug contributing to use of other drugs."

A landmark twin study was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2003. Australian researchers attempted to eliminate genetic and environmental variables in measuring the effects of early marijuana use. 2,765 pairs of twins were interviewed, and 311 pairs were found to differ in their early experience with marijuana. These 311 pairs of twins were divided by the investigators into those twins who reported marijuana use before age 17 and those who either never used marijuana or first used after the age of 17. The twins with the early use of marijuana were found to have a 1.6 to 6-fold greater risk of progressing on to future drug and alcohol use across all categories—including cocaine, hallucinogens, sedatives, and opiates. This study powerfully implicates marijuana as a "gateway" to later drug use. SOURCE -- Journal of the American Medical Association 289(4); 427, 2003

Factoid – Kids DO Listen

Kids listen. Oh, we know this is hard to believe, but kids do listen to their parents. Research has proven it. In regards to smoking, kids do listen to their parents when the parents consistently share anti-smoking messages. This is true even when the anti-smoking messages come from parent who smoke cigarettes themselves!

A three-year study of 776 families demonstrated this finding and was recently published in the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. While children of smokers are at high risk for smoking themselves, any preventive efforts their parents make can still help. Talking with their kids worked for these parents. Parents can still tell their kids why they started, why they can't stop, and that they wish they had never started. Parents, you are still the most influential person in your child's life, and your message matters-- no matter what. SOURCE -- Arizona Republic 1-25-06

What is ASAP?

ASAP stands for Adolescent Substance Abuse Program. Since its origin in 1991 ASAP has proudly served as Arizona's finest outpatient treatment program for youth suffering from substance abuse-- and their families. ASAP was founded by three Arizona psychologists who specialize in adolescent substance abuse: Dr. Phil Lett, Dr. Mark Rohde, and Dr. Curtis Walling. These three psychologists continue to own and operate the ASAP Program as a state-of-the-art Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) treating youth substance abuse at three sites across the Phoenix metro area, with one additional site in Tucson. The ASAP Treatment Model has always been a "best practices" treatment model, and enjoys many years of proven success. The ASAP Program is contracted with all managed care companies and insurance companies, and any youth with health insurance should have no problem gaining admission to the ASAP Program site nearest them should the clinical need exist. ASAP is also an AHCCCS provider.

For more information on the ASAP Program visit our website anytime at <http://asapaz.com/> or call (602) 434-0249.

How can I get a youth into the ASAP Program?

The easiest way to get a youth admitted into the ASAP Program, or to simply get more information about the ASAP Program, is to call the ASAP Intake Coordinator in your community:

For any of the three Phoenix area locations call Dr. Joanna Woods at (602) 434-0239

In Tucson call (520) 241-0042

There is no waiting list for admission into the ASAP Program at any site. Again, all insurance plans are accepted.

The exact addresses for the ASAP Program are:

1. ASAP East Valley-- 2530 South Alma School Road Mesa, AZ 85202
2. ASAP Scottsdale-- 3839 East Shea Boulevard Phoenix, AZ 85028
3. ASAP West Valley-- 8607 N. 59th Avenue #C-6 Glendale, AZ 85302
4. ASAP Tucson-- 5360 East Pima Street Tucson, AZ 85712

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answers to the Marijuana Quiz --

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