

Marijuana Use Is Unhealthy

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Users of marijuana may experience many different effects, including some very unpleasant ones. The American Psychiatric Association recognizes a number of marijuana-caused mental disorders, which may last for long periods of time. Smoking marijuana disrupts the immune system, puts users at greater risk of developing lung cancer than that faced by tobacco smokers, can cause emphysema and other lung diseases, and increases the risk of heart attack. Brain function is adversely affected and connections have been found between marijuana use and bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and other mental problems—including the ability to learn and cope with everyday responsibilities. The drug can adversely affect the reproductive system and harm unborn babies. Driving skills are impaired long after the user’s euphoria has worn off. Marijuana can be physically and emotionally addictive, and its use often precedes the use of heavier drugs.

[A] teen tells his story on the Marijuana Anonymous Web site:

The first time I smoked weed was during the summer before eighth grade. I was really curious to see what it was all about. I had a few hits, but didn’t really get stoned. Later, I smoked some more. I got so high I didn’t even know what was going

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Marijuana

on. The next chance I got to get high, I jumped on it. The more I did it, the more I liked it. I loved the way pot played with my head.

Finally, I got caught. I was grounded for a while, but I went right back to it. That happened over and over until my parents decided to put me in a chemical dependency program. I managed to still smoke pot on the day furthest from my drug tests. I tried all those purification concoctions, but my dad eventually found out. I was still determined not to let anybody rob me of my “God-given rights,” so I continued to smoke bud and got “dirty” drug tests. My grades weren’t really suffering so I saw no reason to stop. I kept getting into more trouble.

Finally, disaster struck. I was caught at school. My hearing to determine whether I am expelled or not happens very soon. My eyes have been opened. Getting caught once can ruin your life. By staying sober, I am getting all my privileges back. As for school, I hope to be allowed back in. My only job is to stay out of trouble.

Marijuana Effects Vary

The way that a person feels or reacts after taking marijuana can be decided by many factors. Not all people will have noticeable adverse effects, nor will everyone be able to escape with only a pleasant high. How a user reacts to cannabis can be affected by how many times a person has previously used the same drug, how much THC [delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana] is present in the marijuana, how the drug is consumed, and whether or not the marijuana is mixed with other drugs or alcohol. Things like the user’s expectations and where the drug is used can change how a person reacts as well.

There are many possible responses to a drug like marijuana. Some people may feel nothing at all after taking the drug. Others will feel a high—relaxed and happy. At other times, the marijuana results in physical feelings of hunger or