

# Marijuana Fact Sheet

## COMMON MYTHS

### 1. Marijuana is harmless:

Smoking marijuana leads to changes in the brain similar to those caused by cocaine, heroin, and alcohol. Use of marijuana can lead to increased anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, suicide, cognitive deficits, and lung damage. Kids who use marijuana are at risk for low-academic performance and may negatively affect sports performance.

Early marijuana use leads to more negatively affected brain development as your brain does not stop developing until mid-twenties.

### 2. Marijuana is not addictive:

Use of marijuana can lead to dependence and heavy users may develop withdrawal symptoms when they stop using. Marijuana use is associated with behavior that meets the American Psychiatric Association definition for substance dependence which includes tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, giving up activities for drug use, and using the drug even in the face of adverse effects. Marijuana is a gateway drug that can lead to over-use and other drug use after a tolerance has been built up to the “regular” effects.

### 3. Marijuana is less harmful than tobacco :

Marijuana contains many of the same cancer causing chemicals found in tobacco. The amount of tar inhaled and the level of carbon monoxide absorbed by marijuana smokers is 3-5 times greater than tobacco smokers.

### 4. Marijuana is legal in some places so it is okay to use.

Places such as Denver, CO, where marijuana is legal, have seen increased rate of crime and medical emergencies related to marijuana use. Traffic related marijuana deaths have increased by 48% as have emergency room visits. Crime rates have increased by 44%.

## Short Term Effects:

- Increased appetite
- Inability to concentrate
- Red eyes
- Dry mouth
- Delusions
- Insomnia
- Loss of consciousness
- Clumsy, accident prone

## Long Term Effects:

- Weight gain
- Risk of oral cancer
- Weakened immune system
- Depression
- Chest and lung problems
- Memory loss
- Reduced motivation

