

MARIJUANA

FACT SHEET

DRUG DESCRIPTION

Marijuana, also commonly referred to as weed or pot, is a mixture of dried leaves, stems, flowers, and seeds from the Cannabis sativa plant. This dried mixture is normally hand-rolled to create "joints" or "blunts" which are then smoked. Marijuana can also be consumed by being mixed into foods such as brownies, candy, and cookies. Other ways to consume marijuana include smoking it through a water pipe, known as a "bong," steeping it in your tea, or smoking it through vaporizers.



WHAT CREATES THE "HIGH?"

The main chemical that is responsible for the intoxicating effects experienced when someone uses marijuana is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is one of the main components that helps stimulate the intense euphoria felt while using this drug.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF USING MARIJUANA?

THE BRAIN



THC stimulates specific receptors and over activates parts of the brain highly comprised of these cells creating:

- A euphoric "high"
- Altered senses (colors are brighter, time seems longer, etc.)
- Impairment of coordination
- Change in mood, disposition, & behavior

THE BODY



- **LUNGS:** Irritates lungs causing breathing problems
- **HEART:** Raises heart rate increasing the chance for a stroke
- **STOMACH:** Users may experience nausea, vomiting, or dehydration
- **PREGNANCY:** Use while pregnant has been linked to lower birth weight and increased risk of brain and behavioral problems

THE MIND



- Temporary hallucinations and delusions
- Temporary paranoia
- Memory loss- difficulty studying, learning, remembering recent events
- Loss of IQ points
- Impaired judgement making it more likely to engage in risky behaviors

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FACT VERSUS FICTION

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS ABOUT MARIJUANA

Is marijuana addictive?

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Marijuana use can lead to the development of a substance use disorder. Severe substance use disorders are also known as addiction. Research suggests that between 9-30% of those who use marijuana may develop some degree of marijuana use disorder. People who begin using marijuana before age 18 are 4-7 times more likely than adults to develop a marijuana use disorder.

Is marijuana a "gateway" drug?

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "the use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana are likely to come before use of other drugs,... (however), the majority of people who use marijuana do not go on to use 'harder drugs.'"

Is marijuana really that bad?

According to the National Drug Control Policy, marijuana use can "lead to significant health, safety, social, and learning or behavioral problems." Use also negatively affects your performance in school and athletics. Students who smoke marijuana have been linked with lower IQ scores, lower grades, and higher dropout rates.

Does marijuana affect my driving?

According to the National Institute for Drug Abuse for Teens, "Marijuana affects a number of skills required for safe driving—alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time—so it is not safe to drive high or to ride with someone who has been smoking. Marijuana makes it hard to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road."

Is marijuana a medicine?

At this point the federal government has not approved marijuana as a safe and effective medicine. Scientists have found useful components of the plant known as cannabinoids which have been found useful for treating different illnesses or symptoms. However, the side effects of using marijuana as well as extracting exact dosages make it difficult for this drug to be developed into a medicine.

Information obtained from: The National Institute on Drug Abuse & The National Drug Control Policy

