

Marijuana: What Parents Need to Know

Go to www.Colorado.gov/marijuana to find the latest information about the laws in Colorado.

- Only adults over age 21 may buy, possess, or use marijuana legally.
- It is illegal for people under age 21 to buy, possess, or use marijuana. It is illegal for adults to give marijuana to someone underage, and retail outlets can lose their license for selling marijuana to someone underage.
- Driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal.
- Marijuana is still illegal under federal law. Students with a past conviction of any controlled substance, including marijuana, are **not eligible for federal financial aid for college.**

Research tells us: **(please keep in mind that most studies we have now are based on THC levels of about 12 %.)**

- Surveys of teens repeatedly tell us that they listen most to their PARENTS when it comes to drugs & alcohol use.
- THC levels in marijuana decades ago were about 2.3%. Today THC levels exceed 8% and often reach 35% in medical grades and up to 90% in some edibles.
- Marijuana use at an early age can lead to a greater risk of:
 - Decreased IQ by as much as 8 points
 - Poor educational outcomes
 - Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia
 - Increased absences from school
 - Increased risk of dropping out
 - 1:6 to 1:4 who use at an early age will become addicted

Go to SpeakNowColorado.org (or HableAhoraColorado.org) to learn about signs of youth substance use and tips for talking to your children about drugs and alcohol.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recently released the “Talk. They Hear You.” campaign for parents to prevent underage drinking. The tool can be used to help prevent underage marijuana use in Colorado as well since it is a substance that is legal for adults but not youth to use. <http://beta.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>

Some tips for talking to your children include:

- Start early! Start talking to your children in 4th and 5th grade before they may be tempted to try marijuana.
- Most youth are not using marijuana. Young people do not need to use it to fit in with their peers. Over 60% of high school students and 90% of middle school students in Colorado have never even tried marijuana. (Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, available at www.chd.dphe.state.co.us/topics.aspx?q=Adolescent_Health_Data)
- Be a good role model by not using marijuana or drinking excessively around your children.
- Be sure to keep all drugs and alcohol inaccessible to your children, particularly marijuana edibles that may be enticing to children but are highly concentrated and therefore more dangerous.
- Remain engaged in your children’s lives and keep communication open.
- Give your children ways to say no to drugs. Talk about what they can say, and what they can do if they are offered drugs by a peer.
- Adult bodies and brains are more able to handle alcohol and marijuana use. Youth have bodies and brains that are still developing and are more severely impacted by alcohol and marijuana use.
- Explain that marijuana use is unsafe while driving and doubles the chances of being involved in an accident.
- Explain that marijuana use is associated with:
 - Poor academic performance.
 - Problems with memory and concentration
 - Increased aggression
 - Car accidents
 - Use of other drugs or alcohol
 - Risky sexual behaviors
 - The same breathing problems as come from smoking cigarettes
 - Decreased motivation or interest
 - Lower intelligence
 - Mental health problems like depression, anxiety, anger, moodiness, psychosis, panic attacks, and suicide
 - Decreased or lack of response to mental health medication
 - Increased risk of side effects from marijuana

Sources: SpeakNowColorado.org, <http://beta.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>, <http://learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/parentpreventionbooklet2014.pdf>, http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Pages/Marijuana_and_Teens_106.aspx.

