

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.



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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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## Start Talking!

Building a Drug-Free Future



## KNOW! Alert - Weed Awareness



The U.S. Surgeon General has issued an advisory regarding marijuana use and the developing adolescent brain. He states that the increases in access to this drug, in multiple and highly potent forms, along with a false and dangerous perception of safety among youth, merits a nationwide call to action.

Weed – as most young people call it – is a highly used drug among adolescents in the U.S., second only to alcohol. Nearly 14% of eighth graders, 33% of tenth graders, and 44% of twelfth graders report having used marijuana at some point in their youth.

It is not the drug it used to be either. Marijuana today is much stronger than in the past, whether smoked, vaped, drunk or eaten. The average amount of THC (the component that causes euphoria and intoxication) in marijuana increased from 4% in 1995 to 12% in 2014. In some states where dispensaries have popped up, marijuana is now available with average concentrated THC levels between 18-23 percent. Even more extreme, marijuana “dabs” and “waxes,” which are highly concentrated marijuana products, reach THC levels as high as nearly 76 percent.

The choices for consumption go far beyond the “pot” brownies of the past as well. There are marijuana-infused teas, coffees, gummies, suckers, chocolates, mints, caramels, and assorted cookies - to name a few. Highly



Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free

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intoxicating edibles have become increasingly popular and are finding their way into the hands and mouths of adolescents and young children (both unintentionally and intentionally). And because edible marijuana takes time to absorb and produce its effects, the risk of overdose increases – even when use is intentional.

As shared in the Surgeon General’s advisory, marijuana “acts by binding to cannabinoid receptors in the brain which produce a variety of effects, including euphoria, intoxication, and memory and motor impairments. These same cannabinoid receptors are also critical for brain development. They are part of the endocannabinoid system, which impacts the formation of brain circuits important for decision making, mood and responding to stress.”

The brain continues to develop into a person’s mid-twenties, and during that time is especially vulnerable to the effects of addictive substances. The earlier the onset of use and the higher the concentration of THC, the greater the risks of physical dependence, addiction, and other negative consequences.

Further research is needed to understand the full impact of THC on the developing adolescent brain. However, current studies show that **regular marijuana use during adolescence is associated with:**

- Changes in the brain that involve attention, memory, decision-making and motivation
- Impaired movement, timing and coordination
- Anxiety, agitation, paranoia, and psychosis
- Increased risk for and early onset of psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia
- Greater likelihood of misusing opioids
- Impaired learning and decline in IQ
- Increased rates of school absence and dropout
- Impaired school performance that jeopardizes professional and social achievements
- Deterioration of overall life satisfaction and suicide attempts

The Surgeon General’s advisory is intended to, “raise awareness of the known and potential harms to developing brains. These harms are costly to individuals and to our society, impacting mental health and educational achievement and raising the risks of addiction and misuse of other substances.”

Parents and educators are encouraged to talk to the young people in their lives to share this pertinent information, allowing them to ask questions and discuss openly. At a time when marijuana use is becoming more and more “normalized” in our society, the time to have this conversation is now.

Source: [Office of the Surgeon General. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory: Marijuana Use and the Developing Brain. August 2019.](#)