



OCTOBER 31, 2024

KNOW! TO START TALKING ABOUT CANNABIS

In 2023, Ohio voted to legalize non-medical marijuana use for adults ages 21 and over, with sales beginning in August 2024. By now, you have likely noticed local dispensaries opening and heard news reports discussing cannabis sales.

Young people are also noticing these changes. They might think that legalization means cannabis is safe to use, no matter their age. However, the reality is that cannabis is harmful to the developing brain, and this new landscape in Ohio doesn't change that fact. Even the [Ohio Division of Cannabis Control](#) cautions against cannabis use for individuals under 25.

There's no better time to have an open conversation about cannabis and its potential consequences. By talking with the young people in your life, you can help prevent underage cannabis use and ensure they understand the risks.

BEFORE YOU TALK: KNOW! THE FACTS

What is cannabis?

Cannabis, also known as marijuana, refers to a range of substances derived from the cannabis plant. Common slang terms for cannabis include weed, hash, and pot.

Cannabis products come in various forms. Loose marijuana is often rolled into cigarettes (called joints) and cigars (known as blunts) and can also be smoked using a pipe or bong. Edibles, which are foods infused with cannabis, often resemble popular snacks like baked goods or candy. Marijuana can also be vaporized using devices like vape pens or dab pens.

What risks does cannabis pose to young people?

Brain Health

- Cannabis use before the age of 25 can permanently affect brain development, impeding memory, decision-making, motivation, and attention. (1)
- Like many drugs, cannabis use can lead to dependence and addiction. Those who begin use at a young age are more likely to develop marijuana use disorder.

Lung Health

- Smoking or vaping cannabis can lead to lung problems, such as chronic coughing, bronchitis, and worsening asthma symptoms. (2)
- Smoke from cannabis products contains similar toxins and chemicals as tobacco smoke. (1)

Mental Health

- Using cannabis products can increase the likelihood of long-term mental health problems, like anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.
- In the short term, cannabis use can cause panic attacks and symptoms of psychosis, like seeing or hearing things that aren't there. (1)

Safety

- Cannabis impairs coordination, decision-making, and concentration -- skills essential for safe driving. It is never safe to drive while under the influence of marijuana. (2)

Accidental Poisoning

- Young children who unintentionally consume THC-infused products can become seriously ill and may require hospitalization. Many marijuana edibles come in packaging that looks enticing to younger children, increasing the risk of accidental ingestion. Any marijuana product in your home should be treated like a medication -- stored away and out of sight from children. (3)

WHEN YOU TALK: KNOW! WHAT TO SAY

Tips for Talking to Young People about Cannabis

Talk Openly and Often

- Look for natural moments to bring up cannabis, like when you pass a dispensary or see a character using it on TV. Keep the conversation casual by asking an open-ended question, such as “What do you think about marijuana?” and let the discussion develop naturally. (2)
- Keep an open mind and do your best to remain nonjudgmental. Young people are more likely to shut down or get defensive if they feel criticized or attacked. (1)
- Don’t stop at one conversation. Revisit the topic as opportunities arise, using these moments to introduce new ideas and improve upon what didn’t go so well the last time. (1,2)

Practice Active Listening

- Show that you’re engaged by using body language, like nodding or making eye contact. Reflective statements such as “So, you feel that marijuana is safer than alcohol—is that right?” can help ensure clarity and reduce misunderstandings. (1)
- Highlight the positives during your conversation. Thank your teen for their honesty and respond with empathy to show you value their perspective. (1)

Set Guidelines and Expectations

- Be upfront about your views on substance use. Clearly communicate that you expect them to wait until they are of legal age to use cannabis and set appropriate consequences for actions that don’t align with these expectations. (2)

Embrace the Awkwardness

- Discussing substance use can feel uncomfortable, and that’s okay. Accept that the conversation might be a bit awkward for both of you. Keep the tone relaxed, and avoid pushing them to share more than they’re ready to.
- If your teen isn’t ready to talk, remind them that you’re there for them when they have things on their mind. (1)

AFTER YOU TALK: KNOW! WHAT TO DO

What if I know or suspect my child is using cannabis?

Keep communication open

- Ask questions to better understand their experience, such as “What do you enjoy about using marijuana? How does it make you feel? Could we explore other activities that give you the same positive feelings?” (1)

Share your concerns thoughtfully

- Be honest about your concerns but frame them in a positive way. For example, you might say, “I’m concerned because smoking marijuana can harm your health,” or “I’d rather you find healthier ways to cope with stress than turn to drugs.” (1)

Seek support from others

- Don’t hesitate to reach out to other adults or community resources. If there is a medical or mental health emergency, call 911 or contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

RESOURCES

[Marijuana Talk Kit | an e-book by Partnership to End Addiction](#)

[Setting Limits, Monitoring Behavior - Partnership to End Addiction](#)

[Let’s Talk Cannabis Illinois | Talk Tips and Family Safety](#)

[Cannabis Use in Your Home - Partnership to End Addiction](#)



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