

## PARENTS DISCUSSION GUIDE

# WHAT IS MARIJUANA

There is a campaign going on in your school, we wanted to give you some facts to help you have a discussion. To learn more about vaping visit [definedcampaign.com](http://definedcampaign.com)

### What is Marijuana?

Marijuana is the dried leaves and flowers of the Cannabis sativa or Cannabis indica plant. Stronger forms of the drug include high potency strains - known as sinsemilla (sin-seh-me-yah), hashish (hash for short), and extracts including hash oil, shatter, wax, and budder. Of the more than 500 chemicals that are in marijuana, THC is responsible for many of the drug's mind-altering effects. It's what makes you high.

### What are the risks?

#### Brain Risks

When marijuana is smoked or vaporized, THC quickly passes from the lungs into the bloodstream, which carries it to organs throughout the body, including the brain. This can affect decision making, concentration, and memory for days after use, especially in people who use marijuana regularly. THC attaches to cells with specific kinds of receptors that influence pleasure, memory, thinking, concentration, sensory and time perception, and coordinated movement. Marijuana activates these receptors, which causes the "high" and stimulates the release of dopamine in the brain, reinforcing the behavior. Other effects include changes in perceptions and mood, lack of coordination, difficulty with thinking and problem solving, and disrupted learning and memory.

#### Body Risks

##### Short term effects:

- Altered senses (such as seeing brighter colors)
- Slow reaction time
- Problems with balance and coordination
- Increased appetite
- Trouble thinking and solving problems
- Memory problems
- Hallucinations (seeing things that aren't there)
- Delusions (believing something that is not true)
- Psychosis (having false thoughts)

Mixing marijuana with alcohol can cause increased heart rate and blood pressure. It can also cause further slowing of the ability to think, solve problems, and react.

### Long term effects:

- Increased heart rate.
- Respiratory (lung and breathing) problems.
- Increased risk for mental health problems. Marijuana use has been linked with depression and anxiety, as well as suicidal thoughts among teens.

### Addiction

Approximately 10% of people who use marijuana may develop what is called a marijuana use disorder—problems with their health, school, friendships, family or other conflicts in their life. A serious substance use disorder is commonly called an addiction. People who begin using marijuana before the age of 18 are 4–7 times more likely than adults to develop a marijuana use disorder. People who use marijuana may feel a mild withdrawal when they stop using the drug but might not recognize their symptoms as drug withdrawal. These symptoms may include:

- Irritability
- Sleeplessness
- Lack of appetite, which can lead to weight loss
- Anxiety
- Drug cravings

These effects can last for several days to a few weeks after drug use is stopped. Relapse (returning to the drug after you've quit) is common during this period because people may crave the drug to relieve these symptoms.

### ~~Is Marijuana deadly?~~

There are generally no reports of people fatally overdosing on marijuana alone. However, people can feel some very uncomfortable side effects, especially when using marijuana with high THC levels. There are reports of people who use marijuana seeking treatment in emergency rooms, reporting unease and shaking, anxiety, paranoia, or hallucinations, and in rare cases, extreme psychotic reactions. However, marijuana use can increase risks for accidents and injuries.

### ~~Additional resources~~

- DrugFacts: Marijuana - [drugabuse.gov](https://www.drugabuse.gov)
- Marijuana: Facts for Teens - [drugabuse.gov](https://www.drugabuse.gov)
- Sherburne County SUP Coalition – [sherburnesupcoalition.org](https://www.sherburnesupcoalition.org)