candor health education

MARIJUANA

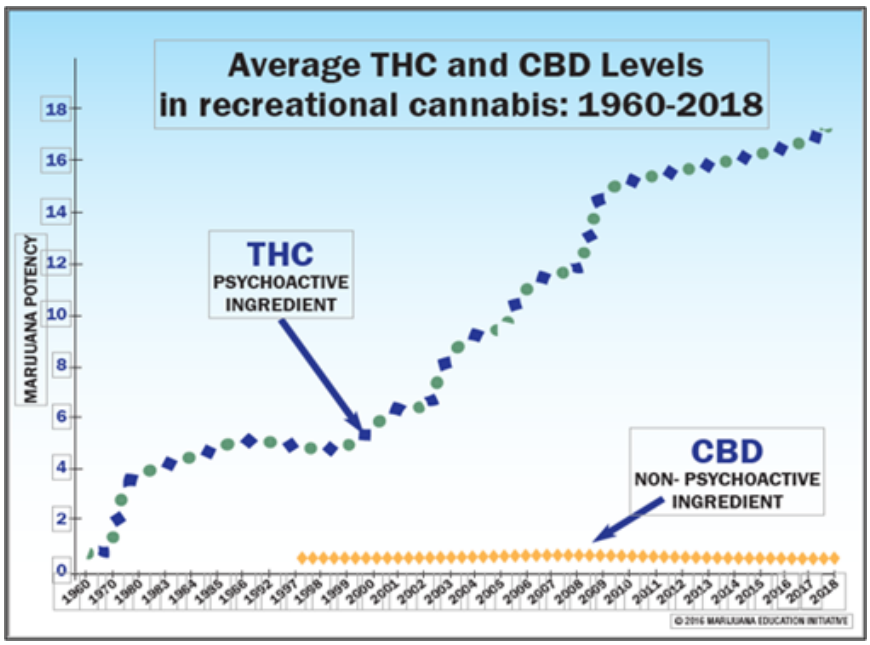
Information for Parents

The movement to legalize marijuana in Illinois and other states across the nation has normalized the use of marijuana and decreased perceptions on the harmfulness of the drug, especially among young people. Some adults may recall having tried marijuana in their youth, but the marijuana available today is a very different drug. Learn more about what has changed with marijuana and how you can have critical conversations with your child about it.

What is marijuana?

Marijuana comes from the Cannabis plant. There are two main chemicals in marijuana: Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD). THC is the chemical that can make someone feel high, light-headed, giggly, or relaxed. CBD is the chemical with more medicinal properties to help with epilepsy seizures, nausea, and pain.

It is important to note that marijuana today is not the same as it was just 20-30 years ago. The levels of THC in marijuana have risen dramatically over the last couple of decades, making today's marijuana more likely to cause addiction as well as induce psychological effects such as hallucinations, paranoia and anxiety. The graph at the right shows the average percent of THC in marijuana has greatly increased, while the levels of CBD have remained the same.



How Does Marijuana Effect the Brain and Body?

Marijuana has many short and long-term effects on the brain and body. Some of these effects are listed in the table below.

Short Term Effects	Long Term Effects
Slower reaction time	Difficulty with memory and learning
Altered sense of time	Lack of motivation
Impaired memory and problem-solving	Physical – problems with breathing, coughing, or lung sickness
Feeling less coordinated	Mental – paranoia
Feeling relaxed, happy	
Feeling anxiety, fear, distrust	
Hallucinations, delusions (in high doses)	

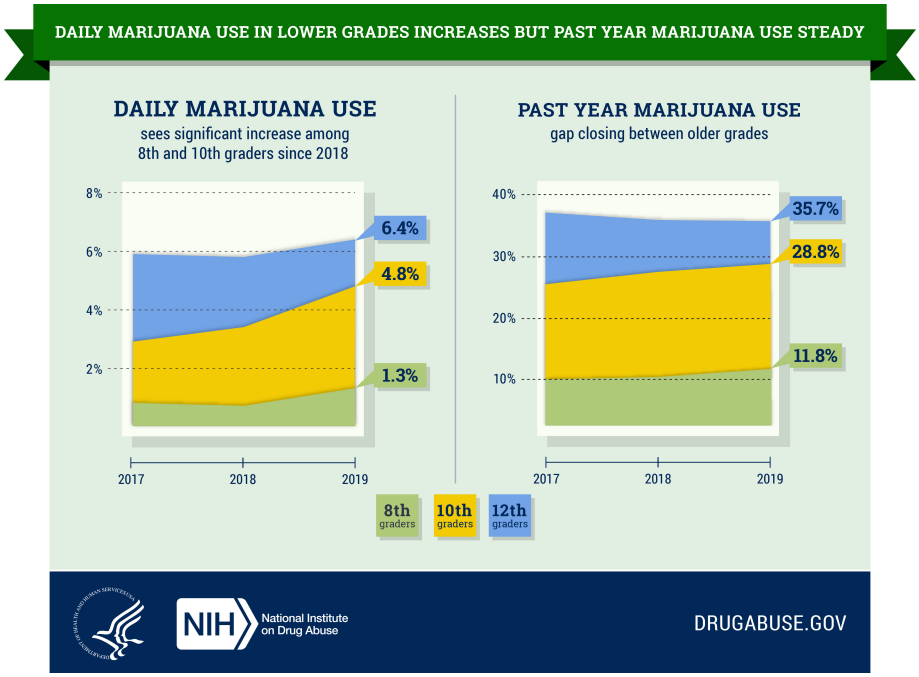
Additional Online Resources:

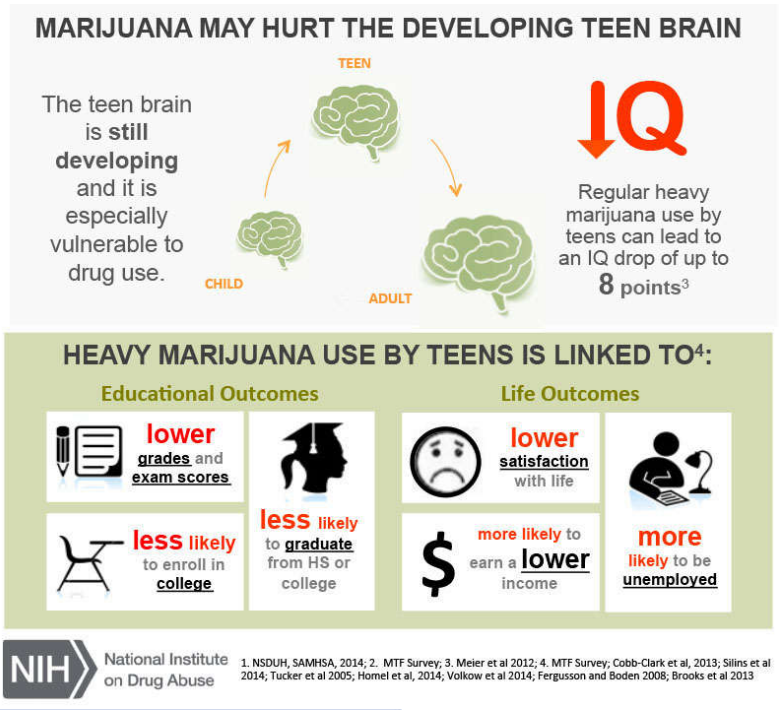
https://candorhealthed.org/parent-information/family-resources/resources-drug-education/
https://candorhealthed.org/drug-education-portal/
https://drugfree.org/article/how-to-talk-about-marijuana/
https://teens.drugabuse.gov/parents/helpful-links

Teen Use of Marijuana

The use of marijuana by teens is on the rise. 2019 data from the Monitoring the Future survey shows that daily use of marijuana is increasing at a significant level at 8th & 10th grades.

This is particularly alarming considering that research indicates that early initiation of drug use leads to a 5x greater risk of becoming addicted. Because the teen brain is still developing, it is more likely to be negatively impacted by marijuana use. While 1 in 10 chronic marijuana users will develop an addiction to it, that number becomes 1 in 6 for teenagers. The infographic (NIDA, 2014) at the bottom shows some of the potential outcomes of chronic marijuana use by teens.





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Forms of Use

There are several ways that people use marijuana: smoking, vaping, edibles, or in oil form. While all of these forms are dangerous to the developing brain, some have particularly high concentrations of THC and are becoming more popular with young people.

Edibles: These are food products infused with highly concentrated forms of THC, and because the food has to be digested, the substances have a delayed effect on the body – usually taking about one hour. Often, individuals either incorrectly dose edibles or eat more than they are intending, which has led to an increase in emergency department visits from panic attacks, hallucinations, overwhelming dizziness, and stomach sickness.

Dabs: These are a form of concentrated marijuana with levels of THC typically between 70-90%. Dabs come in many consistencies from oil to solid and are often called wax or shatter. Dabs are typically smoked through a dab rig, a dab pen or other device.

Vaping: Marijuana vapes work by heating a liquid or oil that becomes a vapor the user inhales. These THC oils tend to be highly concentrated and hit the brain quickly when vaped.

What are some ways to talk to your child about marijuana?

- **Ask them what they know** - With social media and the Internet at their fingertips, chances are they may be seeing references to marijuana more than you think, and often these vehicles glamourize its use. Pay attention to the social media influencers that your child follows. In addition, the number of middle and high school students using marijuana is on the increase. Chances are they may know people who use.
- **Arm yourself with facts** - Don't simply rely on personal experiences and common sense to help you navigate this topic with your child. Use this newsletter and the additional resources below to help you stay on top of the current research on teen marijuana use.
- **Be approachable and initiate conversations on topic** -Teens often become defensive when they think a lecture is coming. Talking while in the car and using real life situations are some ways to bring up the subject. Talking about it once is not enough.
- **Use news stories as a way to start conversations** - with the recent legalization on recreational marijuana in Illinois, it remains a frequent news topic
- **Set an example by abstaining from use** - It may not always seem like it, but you are the biggest influencer in your child's life. Most teens say that they believe parents are the most common reason that people their age choose not to drink or use drugs.
- **Stay engaged** – Share family meals. Remove electronic devices from meals, bedrooms, and family activities. Take an interest in their interests. Get to know their friends.

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Chicago High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas