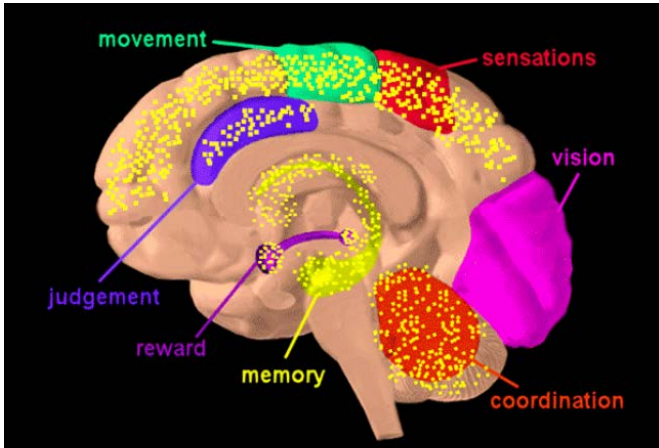


HIGH POTENCY THC MARIJUANA



Information for Parents

Fall 2023



Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is one of the main chemicals found in marijuana. THC can make someone feel high, light-headed, giggly, and relaxed. For others, THC can make them feel paranoid and anxious, particularly when used in a concentrated form.

The human brain has many receptors, one kind being cannabinoid receptors. THC attaches to these receptors altering normal brain communication. This occurs in the areas of the brain that influence pleasure, memory, thinking, concentration, movement, coordination, and sensory and time perception. The image on the left shows just how pervasive these receptors are throughout the brain and the various brain functions that are impacted.

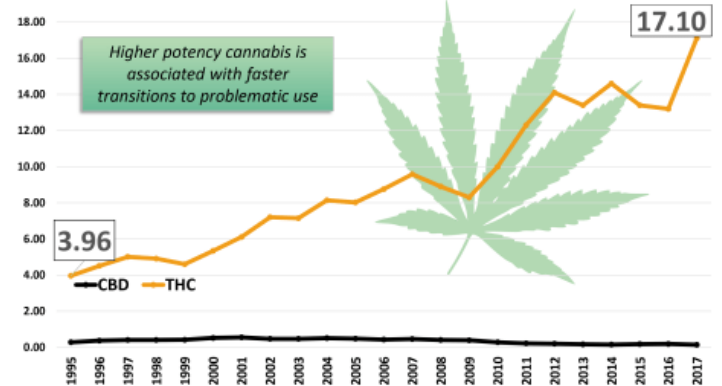
(National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA))

THC Then & Now

Many Gen X and Millennial parents are unaware that the potency of marijuana products has changed significantly since they were teenagers. The products available today have dramatically higher amounts of THC, making them more powerful and more addictive than a generation ago.

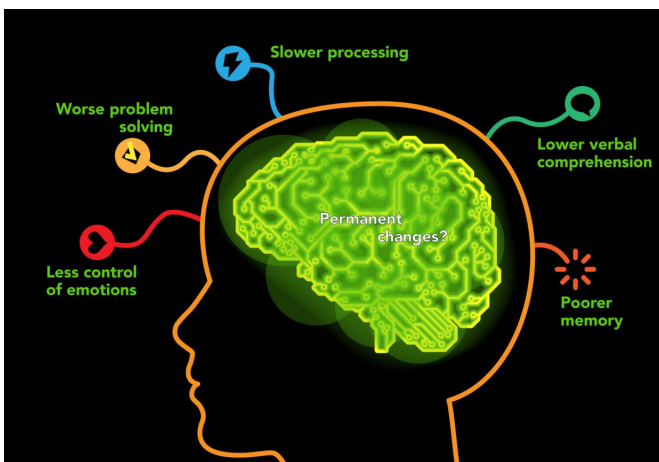
Before 2000, a typical joint had less than 4% THC. Today, the dried cannabis flower averages closer to 15-20% THC. Additionally, the high-potency products most popular with teens such as, THC-concentrated oils, waxes, crystals, and edibles, often contain anywhere from about 40% to upward of 95% THC. These potencies are particularly concerning, as studies have shown that use of higher potency cannabis, is associated with an increased risk of psychosis and cannabis use disorder. Currently, only two states that have legalized recreational marijuana; Vermont and Connecticut have put caps on potency, 30% for cannabis flower and 60% for THC concentrates.

Average THC concentrations in cannabis have increased dramatically from 1995 to 2017



Eisshly, M.A., Mehmmedic, Z., Foster, S., Gon, C., Chandra, S., & Church, J.C. (2016). Changes in cannabis potency over the last 2 decades (1995-2014): Analysis of current data in the United States. *Biological Psychiatry*, 79(7), 613-619.

Chandra, S., Radwan M.M., Majumdar C.G., Church J.C., Freeman T.P., & Eisshly M.A. (2019). New trends in cannabis potency in USA and Europe during the last decade (2008-2017). *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 269:5-15. (correction)



What are the health effects of High Potency THC? (NIDA)

- More likely to produce anxiety, agitation, paranoia and psychosis.
- It's highly addictive. Teens at increased risk - 1:6 users will become addicted.
- Teens are more vulnerable to impact of THC because their brain is still developing.



How prevalent is THC use among young people?

According to the most recent statistics from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) nearly 28% of American high school students have used marijuana in their lifetime and almost 16% within the last 30 days. About 5% say they started before the age of 13. It is important to note that early initiation increases the likelihood of addiction because of the how it interrupts normal brain development throughout adolescence.

The following forms of marijuana use are often highly concentrated with THC and are becoming more popular with teens.

Edibles: These are food products, such as gummies or brownies that are infused with highly concentrated forms of THC, and because the food must 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.

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. A 2021 study published in JAMA pediatrics, found that the number of teens who vaped marijuana within the last 30 days increased seven-fold from 1.6% to 8.4% between 2013 and 2020.

Ways to talk to your child about high potency THC products and strategies for prevention.

- 1. Arm yourself with facts:** By reading this newsletter and exploring some of the additional links below you are well on your way.
- 2. Be approachable and initiate conversations on this 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. Keep the conversations casual and ongoing.
- 3. 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 often glamorize it. Likely, they have seen people they know using marijuana.
- 4. Establish Clear Rules:** Setting clear, specific rules is the foundation for the parental effort in prevention. Create the rules with your child and enforce them consistently.
- 5. Know Their Friends:** Pay attention to who your child is hanging out with and take the opportunity to introduce yourself to their parents.
- 6. Be their way out:** Let your child know that they can call you anytime to come get them or when in a peer pressure situation. They can use you as an excuse.

Additional Resources:

<https://johnnysambassadors.org/>

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Marijuana-and-Teens-106.aspx

<https://candorhealthed.org/parent-information/family-resources/substance-abuse-prevention-resources/marijuana-information/>

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**Chicago High Intensity
Drug Trafficking Areas**

