

# Talk to Your Child About Marijuana

Time and again, kids say their parents are the single most important influence when it comes to drugs. So this message needs to start with you. Kids need to hear how risky marijuana use can be. Don't wait until your child has a problem. The earlier you talk to your kids about marijuana, the less likely they will be to use it. Find a time like driving your child to school or soccer practice and use it as an opportunity to talk. Tell your kids how marijuana interferes with concentrating on schoolwork or their ability to play sports. Explain the legal trouble they can get into and let them know they could lose a job or a scholarship. Tell them how to stay away from risky situations and what words to use if someone offers them marijuana.

## Marijuana Facts

Many more kids use marijuana than any other illicit drug by far.

Young teens are trying marijuana at a time when their bodies and brains are still developing.

The number of 8th graders who used marijuana doubled between 1991 and 2001, but in the past two years overall teen use has declined.

Many people who use marijuana have trouble quitting and experience withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, difficulty sleeping and anxiety.

Marijuana can lead to a host of health, social and behavioral problems at a crucial time in kids' lives.

Marijuana today is more potent and its effects can be more intense.

Adolescent marijuana users show lower academic achievement compared to nonusers.

Even short-term marijuana use has been linked to memory loss and difficulty with problem solving.

## What else can I do to keep my kids away from marijuana?

Be involved in your kids' lives. Ask *who*, *what*, *when* and *where*.

Know *who* your child's friends are, *what* your child is doing, *when* she'll be home and *where* she's going.

Eat dinner together, listen to music, watch a ball game, do chores.

Set a firm rule of no drug use in your family.

You are your kids' most important role model. They notice everything you do. Commit yourself to a drug-free lifestyle.

The hours after school, between 3 and 6 p.m., are when lots of kids get in trouble. During summer months, kids have even more free time on their hands. Try to be with your kids, but if that's not possible, make sure your child is occupied with an adult around: sports, jobs, clubs, after-school programs or religious youth groups.

And be sure to let your kids know that you don't want them using marijuana.

## What to say if your child says:

**"Marijuana is harmless."**

Smoking marijuana is every bit as bad as smoking cigarettes, and you already know how dangerous tobacco is to your health.

**"It's not addictive."**

More kids enter drug treatment for marijuana than for all other illicit drugs combined.

**"It can't cause any real problems in the long term."**

If you're smoking marijuana, you could do things that jeopardize your future, like having sex or getting in trouble with the law.

**"Marijuana makes you mellow."**

Not always. Marijuana use is associated with violent behavior. Kids who use marijuana weekly are four times more likely to engage in violent behavior than those who don't.

**"Marijuana's not as popular as new drugs like ecstasy."**

More kids use marijuana than cocaine, heroin, ecstasy and all other illicit drugs combined. Sixty percent of kids who use illicit drugs use marijuana only.

**"If I smoke marijuana, I'm not hurting anyone else."**

Marijuana trafficking is a big, often violent business, at home and abroad. And if you get caught, it will really hurt your parents.

*“It’s a natural plant;  
how bad could it be?”*

TEEN, HOUSTON, TX

It’s hard to imagine your child using marijuana. But chances are, kids today will be faced with, “Should I or shouldn’t I?” Young people have many stresses and the notion that “drugs will make you feel better” can have a lot of appeal.

Also, youth might see drugs as something to experiment with or that can help them fit in.

Research has shown that many parents today are ambivalent about marijuana. Some consider it to be relatively risk-free and are more concerned about drugs such as cocaine or ecstasy. The wake-up call for parents, however, is that marijuana is not a harmless drug. It’s time to teach your child that the answer to the marijuana question is, “I shouldn’t, and I won’t.”

If you suspect that your child is using marijuana, you can get help by contacting your child’s school counselor, family physician or pediatrician. To learn more about the risks of marijuana use and its signs and symptoms, visit [www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com) or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) at (800) 788-2800.

For information about a drug treatment center close to you, visit [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov) or call NCADI at the number listed above.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy’s National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign is conducting a national initiative to educate Americans about the negative consequences of marijuana use among youth. The initiative involves some of the Nation’s most respected youth-serving, parenting and public health organizations to help debunk popular misconceptions about marijuana.

# Wake Up to the Risks of Marijuana

*A Guide for Parents*

**PARENTS.**  
THE ANTI-DRUG.

Marijuana is riskier than you think, especially for kids. If you’re not talking to your kids about the risks of marijuana, they might be getting the wrong message.