

# MARIJUANA MYTHS AND FACTS

## 1 MYTH *Marijuana is harmless*



**FACT** Marijuana is harmful in many ways and children are most the susceptible to its harmful effects. Harmful effects include cognitive impairment, causing problems with concentration and thinking, leading to impaired judgment. Increased risk of developing anxiety, depression and risk of psychosis.<sup>1,8,10</sup>

Heavy users of marijuana can have short-term problems with attention, memory, and learning, which can affect relationships and moods. mental health problems, by leading to changes in the brain like those caused by cocaine, heroin and alcohol.<sup>2,4,8</sup>

Regular marijuana use harms more than just those who use the drug. It also hurts the babies born to users, it hurts families and communities when users commit crimes or cause crashes on the highway, causing loss of productivity, limiting educational attainment and by contributing to illness and injuries that put a strain on the health care system.<sup>9</sup>

## 2 MYTH *Marijuana is not addictive*



**FACT** Although it was once believed that marijuana was not addictive, recent studies show that it can lead to dependence and some heavy users develop withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping while trying to quit use.<sup>5,7</sup> Marijuana use, is in fact, often associated with behavior that meets the criteria for substance dependence established by the American Psychiatric Association in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)<sup>3</sup> and about 1 in 10 marijuana users will become addicted. For people who begin using before the age of 18, that number rises to 1 in 6.<sup>4</sup>

## 3 MYTH *Marijuana is not as harmful as cigarettes and other tobacco products*



**FACT** Marijuana and tobacco cigarettes share many of the same toxic chemicals,<sup>10,12</sup>

the amount of tar inhaled, and the level of carbon monoxide absorbed by those who smoke marijuana, regardless of THC content, are three to five times greater than among tobacco smokers and there is 50-70% more cancer-causing material in marijuana smoke than in cigarette smoke.<sup>9</sup>

Smoking marijuana on a regular basis often leads to the same breathing problems as tobacco use, such as chronic coughing and wheezing, more frequent acute chest illnesses, and a tendency toward obstructed airways.<sup>5,8</sup>

Research has determined marijuana smoking can cause potentially serious damage to the respiratory system and lungs.<sup>4,11</sup> Also, daily use of relatively small amounts of marijuana (3 to 4 joints) has at least a comparable, if not greater effect” on the respiratory system than the smoking of more than 20 tobacco cigarettes.<sup>9</sup>

## 4 MYTH *Marijuana is used to treat cancer and other diseases*



**FACT** A small number of studies have found that smoking marijuana and man-made forms of the chemicals found in the marijuana plant may ease some of the side effects of chemotherapy such as treating nausea and vomiting.<sup>4</sup>

Few studies have found that marijuana can be helpful in treating neuropathic pain also a result of chemotherapy, however relying solely on marijuana as treatment or for managing side effects while avoiding or delaying conventional medical care for cancer may have serious health consequences. Currently, there is not enough evidence to recommend that patients inhale or ingest marijuana as a treatment for cancer-related symptoms or side effects of cancer therapy.<sup>4,9</sup>

## 5 MYTH *All Marijuana is Natural*



**FACT** There are various forms of marijuana including several synthetic forms of marijuana with unpredictable content so Although it's constantly promoted as “all natural,” marijuana smoke contains more than 400 chemicals.<sup>5</sup>

## 6 MYTH *Legalizing Marijuana will help solve the Opioid Epidemic*



**FACT** Researchers have found little evidence to support the claim that expanding access to medical cannabis by legalizing marijuana will reduce opioid overdose deaths in the United States.<sup>6,13</sup>

There is currently a large and growing body of evidence showing that cannabis use increases, rather than decreases non-medical prescription opioid use and opioid use disorder, concurrent use of marijuana and opioids by patients with chronic pain may indicate a higher risk of opioid misuse.<sup>13</sup>



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## 7 MYTH

### *Marijuana does not affect driving*



After alcohol marijuana is the drug most often linked with drug driving.

Marijuana negatively affects several skills required for safe driving. Large doses of marijuana can impair coordination, affect perception and cause difficulty in problem solving thus slowing reaction time and ability to make decisions while driving.<sup>14,15</sup> The risk of impaired driving associated when marijuana is used in combination with alcohol increases potential risks.<sup>14</sup>

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