

### Discussion Topics

- Why is marijuana illegal?
- Is experimenting with drugs harmless? Why or why not?
- How is marijuana use portrayed in the media, such as television, movies, magazines, music, and the Internet?
- How can you pick supportive friends who are not into drug use?

### Follow-up Activities

- Discuss the fact that most teens do not use marijuana, and that many of those who do use it to take care of stressful feelings, to avoid discomfort, or to numb pain. What are some other ways to cope with the stresses presented in life?
- Have students use the Internet and reference materials to create a map that shows the different regions of the brain and specify the areas affected by marijuana use.
- Have students identify the parts of the body that are affected by chronic marijuana use and describe the effects.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- **[www.acde.org](http://www.acde.org)**  
The American Council for Drug Education site offers an extensive library of substance abuse education and prevention information for kids and adults.
- **[faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html](http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html)**  
"Neuroscience for Kids" provides answers to commonly-asked questions about the brain and neuroscience, with information on the effects of specific drugs on the nervous system.
- **[freevibe.com](http://freevibe.com)**  
A teen-oriented site that provides drug information and support.
- **[teens.drugabuse.gov](http://teens.drugabuse.gov)**  
A NIDA Web site for teens that delivers science-based facts about how drugs affect the brain and body so that kids will be armed with better information to make healthy decisions.
- **[www.marijuana-info.org](http://www.marijuana-info.org)**  
These pages list useful resources regarding marijuana use, its effects and treatment.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Cermak, Timmen L. *Marijuana: What's a Parent to Believe? (The Informed Parent)*. Hazelden Information Education, Center City, MN; 2003.
- Hyde, Margaret O. *Drugs 101: An Overview for Teens*. Millbrook Press, Brookfield, CT; 2003.
- Kuhn, Cynthia. *Buzzed: The Straight Dope About the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy*. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY; 2003.
- Nagle, Jeanne M. *Polysubstance Abuse*. Rosen Publishing, New York, NY; 2000.

For help with a drug problem, call 1-800-662-HELP or go to:  
[www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

#### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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#### COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

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Teacher's Guides Included  
and Available Online at:



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## MARIJUANA

### Grades 7 & up

Successful prevention education must empower teens to develop their own decision-making skills and assume responsibility for making choices that keep them healthy and safe. It is important to convey that most youths do not use drugs. In fact, smoking, drinking and other drug use has fallen among teens in recent years.

Nonetheless, drug related problems continue to devastate families and communities. Prepared with credible information, students develop an understanding of the risks involved in the use of any drug and learn that you don't have to be an addict for drugs to change your life.



## Before Viewing the Program

Engage the group with the following discussion points before viewing the program. Brainstorm a list of responses and record them on the chalkboard or flipchart. After viewing the video, refer to the list and add or revise if necessary.

- Why do people use drugs?
- What is addiction?
- Do you know of someone who is addicted to drugs? What is his or her life like?
- Is there a type of person more likely to become addicted to drugs?
- What is your image of a drug addict?
- Where can a person find support if they are experiencing problems?

## Background

As a word, marijuana is less than a hundred years old. But cannabis, the plant from which the drug is harvested, is probably older than civilization itself. Some say it opens a door to horrible consequences, while others tout its medicinal benefits. Marijuana has been both praised and condemned throughout the history of mankind. The ancient Chinese used its tough fibers to make hemp for rope, and woodcarvings found in medieval monasteries reveal that Christian monks used the hemp fibers from the cannabis plant to make early forms of paper. 17th-century sails were made from cannabis fiber, giving us the word, “canvas.” And when Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, the paper came from the fibers of the cannabis plant. Until 1937, marijuana was often prescribed as a sedative. But another thing is certain — marijuana is an illegal drug comprised of numerous dangerous chemicals that can cause panic, paranoia, heart and lung damage and permanent memory loss. Marijuana use also brings with it the risk of fines and time in jail. So what is it about marijuana that makes people take the risk?

Marijuana’s effects begin immediately after the drug enters the brain and last from one to three hours. If marijuana is consumed in food or drink, the short-term effects begin more slowly and last longer.

## Effects of Marijuana

Marijuana affects all systems of the body including the heart, lungs, and brain. Within a few minutes after inhaling marijuana smoke, an individual’s heart rate, normally 70 to 80 beats per minute, may increase by 20 to 50 beats per minute or, in some cases, even double. The bronchial passages relax and become enlarged, and blood vessels in the eyes expand, making the eyes look red.

*(Continued)*

When marijuana is smoked, its active primary active ingredient, delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), is absorbed through the lining of the lungs and very, very quickly gets into the bloodstream and then crosses from the bloodstream through the blood-brain barrier and into the brain. There, THC attaches to sites on nerve cells, affecting the way those cells work. As THC enters the brain, it causes a user to feel “high” by attaching to sites on nerve cells and changing brain chemistry, specifically in parts of the brain that regulate movement, coordination, learning and memory.

Some of THC’s effects are useful in the world of medicine, like preventing nausea and blocking pain. When made synthetically and given orally, THC can be used to treat nausea associated with chemotherapy and stimulate appetite in those with AIDS wasting syndrome. It may also be useful for other conditions, including glaucoma. But if you smoke marijuana, THC isn’t the only thing you’re sending into your brain. There are hundreds of other chemicals being sent to the brain, all in a single puff.

Marijuana smokers are likely to have chronic lung problems like bronchitis, wheezing and other respiratory damage like an increased risk of lung cancer. Users of marijuana may also experience heart and central nervous system damage, increase in pulse and decrease in blood pressure, shortness of breath, bloodshot eyes, unsteady balance, and slowed brain functioning. Users slow down, have trouble communicating, and exhibit lessened coherence, which can lead to apathy, depression, loss of motivation, withdrawal, loss of concentration, paranoia, panic, and disorientation. Marijuana impairs learning, memory, and mental performance. In males, chronic use often leads to a decrease in testosterone levels, impotence and lower sperm counts. In females, it raises testosterone levels, which can result in increased facial and body hair, acne and an increased risk of infertility.

## Focus Questions

1. What is marijuana? What are some other terms for marijuana?
2. What is the main mind-altering chemical in marijuana?
3. How does marijuana affect perception and coordination?
4. What are the effects of marijuana on the body?
5. How long does marijuana stay in the body?
6. How does marijuana use affect school, work, and social life?

## Vocabulary

**amotivational syndrome** — A condition sometimes seen in chronic marijuana users, consisting of personality changes including apathy, inability to concentrate and follow routine, and a general lack of enthusiasm.

**Cannabis indica** — A species of hemp that is especially plentiful in the Mideast and India and is the primary source of hashish. *(Continued)*

**Cannabis sativa** — A plant species grown as a source of fiber for rope and paper and also cultivated and sold as marijuana.

**carcinogen** — Any substance that causes cancer.

**craving** — A strong desire or urge.

**dopamine** — A neurotransmitter involved in the brain’s interpretation of pleasure.

**frontal cortex** — A region of the brain responsible for decision making, problem solving and planning.

**gateway drug theory** — The theory that use of one illegal substance will lead to use of others.

**glaucoma** — A disease that causes eye pain, headaches, and sometimes nausea and vomiting.

**hashish** — The concentrated resin from the flowering tops of the female hemp plant.

**marijuana** — The dried leaves and flowers of the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa* and *Cannabis indica*). Marijuana, known by street names, like “pot,” “weed” and “herb,” can be smoked or eaten.

**neurons** — Nerve cells consisting of a cell body, short fibers called dendrites that receive messages from other neurons, and a long single fiber called an axon that transmits messages.

**neurotransmitter** — A chemical released by a neuron at a synapse to relay information to an adjacent nerve cell.

**serotonin** — A neurotransmitter involved in the brain’s regulation of mood, appetite and sensory perceptions.

**physical dependence** — The process that occurs when the body has adapted to the presence of a drug and reduces its own production of neurotransmitters. When drug users develop physical dependence, withdrawal symptoms occur if use of the drug is reduced or stopped abruptly.

**psychological dependence** — A craving or compulsion for repeated use of a drug despite any adverse effects that may occur.

**synapse** — The space between neurons in which neurotransmitters are released.

**tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)** — The major active chemical in marijuana and hashish which causes mind-altering effects.

**tolerance** — A process involving the body’s lessening response to a drug, making it necessary for users to take higher doses of the drug to achieve the same effects once reached with lower doses.

**withdrawal** — Symptoms of illness that occur when an addict discontinues use of a drug.