

# Marijuana **PARENT TOOLKIT**





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## SECTION 1 Marijuana 101

Beginning January 1, 2020 recreational marijuana use became legal for adults 21 and over in Illinois. It is more important than ever for youth to have accurate information to help them make healthy choices. Parents, guardians and other trusted adults are important sources of information for youth. This guide is meant to provide you with:

- Information on how marijuana use could affect youths' short- and long-term health
- General information on the different types of marijuana products
- Strategies for talking with your children, or other youth in your life, about marijuana and ways to support their healthy decision making
- Resources you can turn to for more information

### Why should **YOU** care?

- 1 You are the most important influence on your child's decision making.
- 2 Marijuana use can get in the way of youth's healthy development and future goals.
- 3 It is against the law for anyone under 21 years of age to use marijuana.
- 4 Marijuana is addicting and can be **hard to quit**.

## SECTION 1

# Marijuana 101

**Marijuana is a product of the plant Cannabis** (species sativa or indica). Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive chemical that produces the effect or "high." Some terms for marijuana include bud, blunt, chronic, dab, dope, wax and weed.

**CBD, or Cannabidiol**, is a NON-psychoactive ingredient in marijuana—it does NOT make one high. CBD is readily obtainable in most parts of the United States, though its exact legal status is in flux. A significant safety concern with CBD is that it is primarily marketed and sold as a supplement, not a medication. Currently, the FDA does not regulate the safety and purity of dietary supplements. So you cannot know for sure that the product you buy has active ingredients at the dose listed on the label. In addition, the product may contain other unknown elements. Side effects of CBD use include nausea, fatigue and irritability. If you decide to try CBD, talk with your doctor — if for no other reason than to make sure it won't affect other medications you are taking.

**How is it used?** Marijuana can be used in many different ways.

**Smoked:** Loose marijuana (typically dried flowers or "buds") can be rolled into a cigarette (called a "joint"), smoked in a pipe or water pipe (called a bong) or in a cigar (called a "blunt").

Marijuana can also be mixed or infused into food or beverages and eaten.

It can be used in almost any type of food or beverage.

**Eaten:** Marijuana can be mixed or infused into food or beverages and eaten or drank as "edibles." Marijuana can be added to almost any type of food from brownies and gummy bears, to chocolate and ice cream — many of which are appealing to youth.

**Concentrates/Vaping.** Marijuana can be concentrated through a variety of extraction processes that can dramatically increase the potency. For example some marijuana buds may contain 10–25% THC. Concentrates (such as products called “wax,” “shatter” or “oil”) can range as high as 95% THC. Users can take in concentrates by vaping it, or “dabbing.” A popular item among teens is the “dab pen” which allows teens to vape high-concentrates THC. ***In our community the majority of teens who report using marijuana report that they vape it!***

**Topicals:** Marijuana can be added to lotions, salves and bath salts that are applied directly to the skin and is then absorbed through the skin. Both CBD only and THC products can be made in to topicals. It is important that you check labels to know whether the product contains THC!



### Association between e-cigarette use and marijuana use

A meta-analysis appearing in the August 12, 2019 issue of JAMA Pediatrics finds that marijuana use among young people who use e-cigarettes is 3.5 times higher than those who do not use the devices.

# Marijuana and the Developing Brain:



The teen years represent a time of critical brain development. Areas of the brain that control decision making and learning are maturing. A youth's brain is uniquely vulnerable to the negative effects of any substance, including marijuana. Based on current science, youths who use marijuana are at increased risk for both short - and potential long-term negative outcomes.

## Short-Term Effects:

- Impaired short-term memory, attention, reaction time and motor skills.
- Impaired learning and success in school.
- High levels of THC in marijuana can cause anxiety, paranoia, rapid heart rate, increased blood pressure and vomiting.
- Driving under the influence of marijuana increases the risk of getting into a car crash. Marijuana impairs the skills that are needed to drive safely, including reaction time, coordination, concentration and visual and auditory processing.

## Long-Term Effects:

The harmful effects of marijuana use on a young person's brain may impact their educational and professional goals and ultimate success in life.

Research shows that youth who start using before 18 or who use marijuana regularly may be at higher risk for:

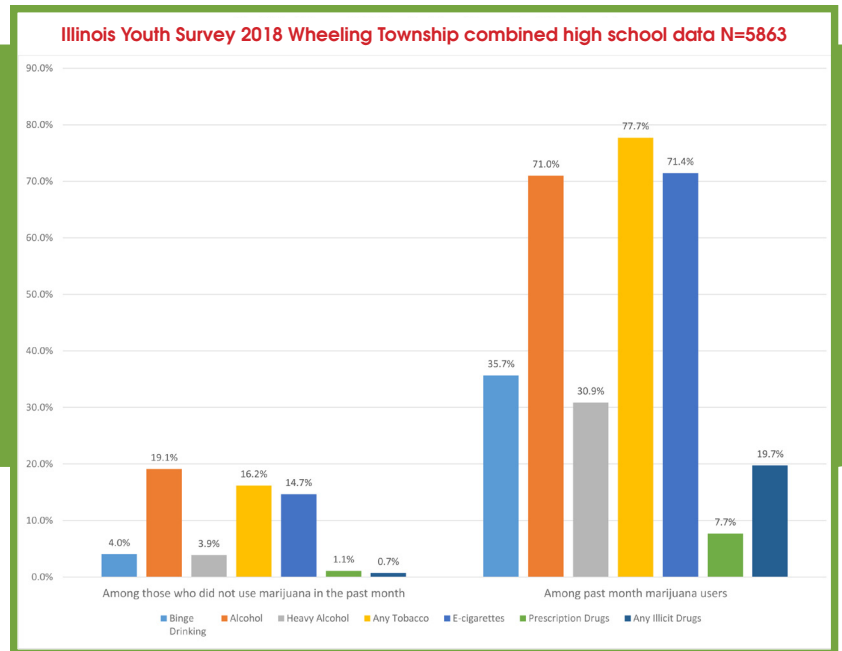
- Skipping class
- Poor school performance
- Not graduating from high school
- Dropping out of college

## Mental Health Effects:

- Rates of anxiety, depression, suicide and schizophrenia are higher with marijuana use.
- Rates of using other illegal drugs (see graph below) are higher with marijuana use.
- Marijuana dependence can develop.

These graphs show the correlation between marijuana use and the increased use of other drugs.

They compare two groups of local high school students in Wheeling Township. The first group has not used marijuana, and the percentage of other drug use is low. The second group has used marijuana regularly, and the percentage of use for other substances dramatically increases.



The **GOOD NEWS** is that most Wheeling Township:  
8th-graders (97%),  
9th graders (93%)  
10th graders (87%)  
11th graders (82%)  
12th graders (74%)  
**DON'T** Currently Use Marijuana. (2018 IYS Data)

## Other Health Effects:

Like tobacco, smoking marijuana is harmful to the lungs. The smoke from marijuana has many of the same toxins and chemicals found in tobacco smoke, and when inhaled can increase the risk of developing lung problems such as the fatal vaping related lung disease.

### Teens care about what parents say and do.

One of the key reasons teens choose not to use drugs is because their parents don't approve.

**Express a no-use attitude.** A national study showed that when youth believe that their parents strongly disapprove of marijuana use, they are more likely to NOT use it compared to youth who believe their parents don't disapprove (4.1% vs 29.3% respectively).

### Set clear guidelines for healthy behaviors & expectations.

Talk about how important healthy behaviors are and establish clear and specific rules about not using marijuana and other drugs. This can be part of a broader conversation about your family's expectations and rules for things like showing respect for family members, following laws and school regulations, and curfews.

Provide consistent consequences when your child does not meet family guidelines. Remember to provide compliments for good choices and healthy behavior.

**Be positive.** Be attentive, curious, respectful, loving and understanding. Shame, anger, scare tactics or disappointment will be counter-productive. Focus on how using marijuana gets in the way of achieving goals, rather than focusing on the potential negative outcomes.

### Start early! Talk often:

Since marijuana use often begins in the early teen years, start an ongoing conversation about drug use before middle school.

Be sure to listen carefully to your child's questions and thoughts.

Make your family's expectations about marijuana use clear and specific. Set your no-use expectation early in the conversation.

### Ideas for talking to tweens:

What do you know about marijuana?

Do you know that marijuana can hurt your health and get in the way of your goals?

Marijuana use is against the law for anyone under 21 years old.

We want you to do well in school, so we have a family rule against using drugs, including marijuana.



## Ideas of what you can say:

- “Remember our family rule against using marijuana.”
- “Let’s talk about how you can refuse drugs, including marijuana, if someone offers them to you.”
- “It is important to our family that we all stay healthy and safe. One way to do this is to avoid drug use, including marijuana.”
- “This is especially important for teenagers since marijuana can harm the developing brain. That’s why we have a family rule against using marijuana.”
- “If we find out you are using drugs, what do you think a fair consequence would be?”

**It’s Not 1 Sixty-Minute Conversation,  
it’s 60, One-Minute Conversations.**

## Give your child ways to say no to marijuana and other drugs

- Role play social situations where someone offers your child marijuana.
- Help your child find the words comfortable for them to refuse drug offers.
- Help your child learn how to suggest an alternative to using drugs.
- Let your child know that it is fine to walk away from someone, including a friend, who is offering drugs.

## Staying on Track:

### Keep track of your child.

- Monitor your child’s behavior to ensure the rules are being followed.
- Remain actively involved in your child’s life and get to know his or her friends.
- Network with other parents and support one another to keep your children away from drugs. Monitor your child’s social media regularly.
- Join community efforts, such as Link Together coalition to help combat youth marijuana use in our community.
- Visit [Linktogethercoalition.org](http://Linktogethercoalition.org) for more information. Follow Link Together on social media for local updates.

### Connect and Touch base.

- Eat dinner together.
- Do fun family activities together.
- Communicate the way your child does (texting, email, social media).

### Be a role model.

You are a role model for your child so think about what you do and the message it sends.

# How you can help:

## How Can I tell If My Teen Is Using Marijuana?

Changes in your child's behavior or mood could be signs of a mental health challenge, stress or possible substance use. Take note of relationship problems with family members and friends, changes in grades, skipping school, loss of interests and sleeping habits.

### Someone high on marijuana might:

- Seem dizzy or uncoordinated
- Seem silly and giggly for no reason
- Have very red, bloodshot eyes
- Have a hard time remembering things that just happened

### Someone using marijuana often might:

- Have an odor on clothes and in the bedroom
- Use incense and other deodorizers in living space
- Increase their use of perfume, cologne or breath mints
- Use eye drops
- Wear clothing or jewelry or have posters that promote drug use
- Have unexplained use of money
- Have items used with drugs such as pipes, bongs, scales, rolling papers, blunt wraps, vape pens, cartridges, or other devices used for vaping

## If your child is using marijuana:

- Keep calm
- **Communication is key!** It is important to say that you want your child to stop using marijuana. However, do this without making your child feel rejected or like a bad person. For example, "Using weed can be harmful to your health and brain, which is why I am concerned. I want you to stop using weed, and I'm here to help you."
- Remember the guidelines that were set and the consequences that go along with breaking them. Remind your teen and be consistent with follow through.
- Leave the door open for problem solving.

## What do I avoid?

### Don't overreact or overemphasize the possible negative outcomes.

This may lead children to take greater risks to prove that they are independent. When consequences feel overly punishing, your teen is more likely to:

- Rebel
- Feel resentment
- Take revenge, causing the behavior to get worse

This is not the time for anger, accusations, name-calling or sarcasm. Avoid words like "should," "stupid," "disappointed" and "can't."



### Isn't marijuana safer for youth than alcohol and tobacco?

Marijuana, alcohol and tobacco are all potentially harmful drugs. Each affects teens differently. Teen marijuana use is associated with many health and safety problems listed earlier in this pamphlet. **In fact, one study showed that marijuana is worse than alcohol on the teen brain. According to one study, marijuana use was shown to be worse for teens than alcohol.**

(Source: A Population-Based Analysis of the Relationship Between Substance Use and Adolescent Cognitive Development. Jean-François G. Morin, B.A., Mohammad H. Afzali, Ph.D., Josiane Bourque, M.Sc., Sherry H. Stewart, Ph.D., Jean R. Séguin, Ph.D., Maeve O'Leary-Barrett, Ph.D., Patricia J. Conrod, Ph.D.)

### Isn't marijuana natural and therefore OK for teens to use?

Many natural things, like poison oak and hemlock, are not good for our bodies. In fact, many drugs are derived from plants, including tobacco, heroin (opium, poppy seeds) and cocaine (coca plant). Regardless of it being "natural," these plants, as well as marijuana, can harm youth bodies and minds.

### What about marijuana brownies and cookies?

Aren't they safer than smoking marijuana? Marijuana, no matter how it is used, can be harmful to youth health. Some marijuana products that are eaten or vaporized are more potent than smoked marijuana. This is because these products are generally much higher in THC concentrations. In addition, it takes a longer time for the THC to impact the user when s/he ingests the THC as opposed to inhaling it. Due to the long onset of actions, users sometimes take one gummy bear (or cookie) and not feel the impact so will take another and maybe another. These situations are the most dangerous and are more likely to cause panic attacks and even psychosis.

### I used pot when I was a kid. How can I tell my child not to use it?

Today's marijuana is, on average, 25% stronger and more potent than that of the 80's and 90's. Concentrates up to 95% THC are sold in Illinois medical marijuana dispensaries and we can assume these products will be sold in recreational dispensaries as well. Products with higher concentrations of THC are more harmful to the growing teen brain, are more addictive and have been shown to be associated with psychosis.

## What should I do if my teen continues using marijuana, even after suffering consequences?

If you think that your teen is unable to stop using marijuana or other drugs, there are people who can help.

- **Contact their doctor or other trusted health professional.**
- **Contact your child's school counselor.**
- **Contact a local agency who can help you evaluate your child's use, such as Omni Youth Services (847) 353-1500 , Nicasa Behavioral Health (847) 546-6450, Rosecrance (888) 928-5278 or Gateway (847) 356-8205.**

## How do I tell my child not to use marijuana if I use marijuana?

Just like with alcohol, tell your child that it is against the law to use marijuana until the age of 21. Explain to your teen that it is important to protect their growing brain and abstaining from alcohol and drug use is a vital way to do this. Take time to reflect on your own use, especially if your child sees you using marijuana. Ask yourself why you use marijuana, how often, what time of day. You may want to try modeling another behavior that helps you unwind, such as going for a walk or working out.

Ask your child "How does my use affect you? I'm curious, because you are important to me." Listen to your child and problem solve together.

Under the new Illinois law, it will be illegal to use marijuana in close physical proximity to a minor.

## Illinois Marijuana Laws and Minors

In May of 2019, the Illinois State Legislature passed House Bill 1438 creating a commercialized market for recreational marijuana. On January 1, 2020, recreational marijuana dispensaries will open allowing residents 21 and older to purchase up to 30 grams of raw marijuana, 500 mg or less of THC cannabis-infused products or 5g of cannabis product in concentrated form.

Legal products include foods and beverages with marijuana infused in them. Some of these products may be attractive to youth and mistaken for common food and beverages. Examples include candy, soft drinks, baked goods and juices.

The law did not change for people under the age of 21. Like alcohol, marijuana products are still illegal for people under the age of 21.

It is illegal for adults to provide marijuana to people under the age of 21, including parents giving their own children marijuana.

It is illegal for people to drive while under the influence of marijuana.

It is illegal to consume (smoke, eat, drink) marijuana products in public.

Under the new law, it is illegal to use marijuana in close physical proximity to anyone under 21 and it will be illegal to allow underage marijuana in your home or rental property.

To report underage marijuana use, call your local police department.