

# Let's talk about **MARIJUANA**

## What is marijuana?

Marijuana is a drug derived from the hemp plant. People sometimes use it for relaxation, decreased anxiety, laughter or talkativeness, intensified sensations, and increased appetite.

## What are the negative effects?

### Acute

Dry mouth, red eyes  
Increased appetite, weight gain  
Distorted perceptions/hallucinations  
Paranoia, panic attacks  
Poor motor coordination  
Increased heart rate

### Persistent

Anxiety  
Impaired attention/coordination  
Sleep Problems  
Depression  
Lack of motivation/interest  
Impaired judgment

### Long Term

Lower IQ (as much as 8 pts)  
Breathing and lung problems  
Addiction  
Risk of other drug use  
Increased risk for psychosis  
Lower employment/salary

**Did You Know?** “Edibles” (marijuana added to baked goods, candies, tea, etc.) can have a delayed effect of 30 minutes or longer. This may lead people to ingest more of the drug which increases associated risks.

## Is marijuana addictive?

Yes. Up to 50% of people who use marijuana regularly will become addicted, and young people are particularly at risk.

- Addiction means having trouble controlling your drug use and not being able to stop even though you want to.
- Exposure to marijuana may make other drugs seem more appealing. Young people who use marijuana are up to 85 times more likely to try other types of illicit drugs.

**Did You Know?** Marijuana is 15-20 times more potent than it was in the 1970's! The more potent the drug, the higher the potential for abuse, addiction, and other harmful effects.

## If marijuana is natural and used as medicine, isn't it safe?

Isolated components of the marijuana plant may have medical properties. As of now, there are only two real “medications” using chemicals derived from marijuana, and these medicines treat nausea and low appetite.

- Regular marijuana, which is usually smoked, contains hundreds of chemicals which can cause unwanted and unhealthy effects on the body and brain.
- Marijuana is NOT approved for treating anxiety, depression, or insomnia. In fact, many studies show that these conditions get worse with marijuana use.

**Did You Know?** Marijuana contains 50-70% more cancer-causing substances than tobacco smoke. One joint has the equivalent cancer-causing substances of 5 tobacco cigarettes.

## Does marijuana affect intelligence?

Marijuana use earlier in life can cause problems with attention and concentration, and even lead to lower IQ scores (intelligence). Marijuana users are less likely to graduate from academic programs. Eventually, marijuana use can contribute to higher risk for unemployment or lower salaries for those who are employed.

**Did You Know?** Even infrequent use (once a month) can impact attention and cause academic problems.

## Does marijuana impair driving?

Yes. Marijuana affects alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time, and makes it hard to judge distances and react to conditions on the road.

**Did You Know?** Marijuana users are 3-7 times more likely to have a car accident, and marijuana use nearly doubles the risk for a fatal crash. In states where use is legalized, traffic accidents and deaths have gone up.

## Isn't marijuana legal now?

Not exactly. **Use of marijuana in public, or use by a person under age 21 remain illegal in Massachusetts.** Under US Federal Law, it is still illegal to grow, buy, sell, or carry marijuana. Boston University abides by Federal law on campus, so marijuana use is illegal on campus. BU does not recognize the use of "medical" marijuana.

**Did You Know?** Students who use or possess marijuana may face a range of consequences, including civil citation, state or federal prosecution, and University disciplinary proceedings.

## How do I know if I have a problem?

Some signs of tolerance or addiction include:

- Needing more frequent or higher doses to feel the same high
- Using to mask anxiety, depression, or other problems
- Needing to use just to feel "normal"
- Having trouble with regular life, such as relationships, or school, because of marijuana use
- Just thinking you ought to cut down, or trying to do so and failing to quit.

## Where can I get help?

Wellness and Prevention  
617-358-0485  
[www.bu.edu/shs/recovery](http://www.bu.edu/shs/recovery)

Behavioral Medicine  
617-353-3569  
[www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral/](http://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral/)

**For more information:** NIDA ([drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)), Drug Free World ([drugfreeworld.org](http://drugfreeworld.org))