

## **What steps can you take to prevent marijuana use in your child? And why is this so important?**

Marijuana is a hot topic of conversation in Portland, in Maine, and across the country—from marijuana as medicine to legalization as a recreational drug. Regardless of where you stand on the issue, the one thing everyone agrees on is that marijuana, like alcohol, prescription and illicit drugs should not be consumed by teens.

Comparing the relative risks and dangers of one drug to another in order to promote its acceptance can be misleading. There is a health risk to any drug you ingest. We need to remember, marijuana and other drugs affect teens' brains differently than adults.

- Marijuana use is linked to heart and lung complications, car crashes and mental illness including schizophrenia, psychosis, depression, and anxiety.
- Marijuana is addictive, defined as dependence that produces withdrawal and cravings. Studies have shown that while marijuana does not have the *same* addictive properties as alcohol or other drugs, *it is still addictive*. **One in six people who try marijuana as adolescents become addicted to it.**
- The developing brain, not fully complete until the mid-twenties, is especially susceptible. For teen users, the reality is they risk missing out on reaching their full potential. Marijuana use directly affects the brain, specifically the parts responsible for memory, learning, attention & reaction time. Driving, participating in athletics and complicated tasks become challenging while under the influence.

### **Other useful resources:**

<http://maineparents.net/teenroom/index.htm>

This webpage helps you decode the signs of use by showing you a teen's room over run with drugs and paraphernalia. Includes definitions and explains ways youth may be concealing their use.

<http://www.drugfree.org/prevent>

This webpage helps you get the conversation started with your teen.

<http://www.maineparents.net/Monitoring/index.htm>

Useful prevention tips for all drug and alcohol use

## So what can parents do to help their child avoid marijuana use?

*For that, we can turn to what our students are telling us:*

**High school students who believe that marijuana is easy to get are 7x's as likely to use marijuana.**

This makes us believe **that limiting access to marijuana** is an effective means of preventing youth from using marijuana.

- Know your child's friends and their parents.
- Does anyone in your child's life use marijuana medicinally?
  - If so, where do they smoke & do they lock up their marijuana?
- Does anyone in your child's life use marijuana recreationally?
  - If so, talk to your teen about the realistic risks and consequences
  - Is it possible to limit their exposure to their use?
- Does your teen have access to large amounts of cash?

**High school students who don't believe their parents think it is wrong for them to use marijuana are 4x's as likely to use marijuana.**

Clarify your *rules, expectations, and consequences* around marijuana use with your child. Take advantage of teaching moments to explain the risks, your concerns, and the purpose for your rules. Ideally you want them to understand you wish to keep them safe and for them to live healthy, productive lives.

**Teens who believe there is little risk if they smoke marijuana regularly are 5x's more likely to use marijuana.**

Share with youth the research and the facts on the risks of long-term marijuana use. Do they want to pursue a career that will depend on their ability to think clearly, quickly, and recall details? Do they value keeping their lungs healthy, or plan to have children? Is there a risk factor for mental illness in your family? If so, avoiding marijuana should be a priority.

As a parent, your advice and guidance is important to them, ***even if they don't show it.***