



American College of Pediatricians

www.BestforChildren.org

Patient Information Handout

MARIJUANA IS HARMFUL FOR YOUTH

Do not confuse legal with safe

Although increasing legalization of marijuana has contributed to the growing belief that marijuana is harmless, research documents the risks of its use by youth are grave. Marijuana is addicting, has adverse effects upon the adolescent brain, is a risk for both cardio-respiratory disease and testicular cancer, and is associated with both psychiatric illness and negative social outcomes. Evidence indicates that legalization of marijuana raises rates of exposure to marijuana among children and adolescents. Therefore, the American College of Pediatricians supports prohibiting marijuana except in the context of well controlled scientific studies which demonstrate medicinal benefit together with evidence-based guidelines for optimal routes of delivery and dosing for specific medical conditions. The College urges parents to discuss these facts with their children and to firmly state their disapproval of marijuana use.

THE PROBLEM: There is evidence that the legalization of marijuana leads to increased exposure to marijuana among children and adolescents. Data from the Colorado Public Safety report, clearly shows that marijuana legalization in Colorado has resulted in significantly greater and more frequent usage of marijuana in adolescents and young adults. The Colorado data shows that the rate of marijuana usage in Colorado increases exponentially through the middle and high school years. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)-funded 2013 *Monitoring the Future* study of the year 2012 showed that 12.7 % of 8th graders, 29.8 % of 10th graders, and 36.4 % of 12th graders had used marijuana at least once in the year prior to being surveyed. Within the same age groups 7%, 18% and 22.7% had used marijuana in the past month.

CONSEQUENCES: Approximately 17 % of those who start using marijuana during adolescence and 25-50 % of daily users become addicted. Marijuana causes lung disease, cardiovascular disease and cancer. Marijuana is also especially harmful to the teen brain; it impairs memory and other functions causing difficulties in daily life and the worsening of existing problems. Heavy marijuana users report lower life satisfaction, reduced mental and physical health, more relationship problems, and less academic and career success.

HOPE: Children look to their parents for help and guidance in making decisions. Therefore, parents should be role models, and not use marijuana or other illicit drugs. Parents must also discuss the serious health consequences of marijuana use with their children. Studies have found that adolescents are much less likely to use marijuana if their parents state their disapproval.

MARIJUANA IS NOT SAFE FOR YOUTH

- 25-50 percent of daily marijuana users become addicted
- Marijuana has all the same toxins as cigarettes and tobacco products
- Marijuana has higher levels of cancer-causing agents than cigarettes
- Marijuana causes the same lung and heart diseases as tobacco
- Marijuana impairs consciousness, memory, concentration & reflexes
- Marijuana use by teens permanently impairs memory capacity and lowers IQ
- Marijuana is associated with psychosis, depression and anxiety
- Marijuana often leads to the use of (and addiction to) harder drugs
- Marijuana may increase school failure, car accidents and sexual assault
- Legal does NOT mean safe; legal pot lands children in intensive care units

For references to the scientific literature regarding these and other facts about marijuana, visit the
American College of Pediatrician's website:

www.ACPeds.org