

## MYTH OR FACT: The Truth about Marijuana and Other Drugs

**Myth or Fact?** Compared to other drugs, marijuana is not addictive.

**Correct Answer: Myth**

The criteria for addiction includes: abuse, tolerance, withdrawal and cravings.

Research shows...

- Teens who use marijuana regularly continue to use it despite experiencing problems at school, work and with their families (Abuse).
- Teens who begin experimenting with marijuana find that they need to increase their use in order to get the same effects (Tolerance).
- People who regularly smoke marijuana have withdrawal symptoms – drug cravings, decreased appetite, nervousness, irritability, stomach pain, aggression and anxiety, among others (Withdrawal).

Some Findings on Marijuana Addictions:

- Research shows that about 1 in 11 of those who use marijuana at least once will become addicted. This rate increases to about 1 in 6 if you start in your teens.
- Among young people in drug abuse treatment, marijuana accounts for the largest percentage of admissions: 61% of those under age 15 and 56% of those between the ages of 15-19.

**Myth or Fact?** There is no difference in drinking or smoking marijuana now or in waiting until you are an adult.

**Correct Answer: Myth**

Using substances can lead to changes in an adolescent's developing brain.

Addiction is a Developmental Disease: It Starts Early:

Teens who start drinking by age 13, have a 43% chance of becoming addicted. Those who wait until they are 18, have 30% chance. Those who wait until 21, have only a 10% chance.

Effects of Substance Use on Adolescents' Brain:

- Studies have found that adolescent heavy drinkers exhibit decrements in memory, attention and speeded information processing, and executive functioning.

- Abnormalities have been seen in youth with as little as 1-2 years of heavy drinking and consumption levels of 20 drinks per month, especially if more than 4-5 drinks are consumed on a single occasion.
- Recent studies suggest that even after four weeks of monitored abstinence, adolescents who regularly smoke marijuana perform poorer on performance tests of learning, cognitive flexibility, visual scanning, error commission, and working memory.
- The number of lifetime marijuana use episodes is significantly related to overall poorer cognitive functioning, even after controlling for lifetime alcohol use.

**Myth or Fact?** Marijuana is a natural plant so it has to be less harmful than cigarettes!

**Correct Answer: Myth**

- Marijuana is more harmful than cigarettes given that the technique for smoking marijuana generally involves unfiltered smoking, larger puffs, deeper inhalation and longer breath holding.
- 5 joints a day can be as harmful as 20 cigarettes a day.
- Marijuana smoke deposits four times more tar in the lungs and contains 50 percent to 70 percent more cancer causing substances than tobacco smoke does.
- Currently, marijuana products are not subject to any health and safety standards and, therefore, may be contaminated with other drugs, pesticides or toxic fungi completely unknown to the user.
- Marijuana smoke contains over 400 chemicals, many of them carcinogenic.

**Myth or Fact?** Most students use marijuana.

**Correct Answer: Myth**

60% of RI students and 65% of students nationwide have never used marijuana.

**Myth or Fact?** Synthetic marijuana and Bath Salts are safe because they are sold in stores.

**Correct Answer: Myth**

Spice (also known as K-2) Synthetic Marijuana is sold in convenience stores, gas stations and small markets. The chemical compounds are slightly altered to keep the product legal. There are people who have to be treated in Emergency Rooms

for vomiting, confusion, increased blood pressure, chest pains, paranoia and hallucinations from K2 and Bath Salts.

**Myth or Fact?** Prescription drugs are not harmful if they are prescribed by a doctor.

**Correct Answer: Depends**

Their harmfulness really depends on the who, how and why of it:

- Who were they prescribed for (you or someone else)?
- How are you taking them (as prescribed or not)?
- Why? To get well or to get high?
- Mixing pills with other drugs or with alcohol really increases your risk of death from accidental overdose.
- Abuse of prescription stimulants like Ritalin and Adderall can cause serious health problems, including panic attacks, seizures and heart attacks.