

# Cannabis (Marijuana):

## *What Parents and Caretakers Need to Know*

Cannabis is a controversial subject. But there is one thing we can all agree on. We need to protect the health and well-being of our youth. *Cannabis is not safe for children and adolescents.*



### NOT YOUR PARENT'S WEED

Cannabis is 10 to 30 times more potent (stronger) today than it was decades ago. Higher potency is linked to more severe health effects, including anxiety, agitation, paranoia, nausea, and vomiting. High potency is also associated with an increased risk of addiction and mental health disorders in teens.



### NEW WAYS TO CONSUME...AND CONCEAL

Today, *cannabis concentrates* are increasingly popular. These are made by distilling THC—the chemical compound responsible for Cannabis' mind altering effects—into an oily liquid, a waxy residue, or a brittle substance. Cannabis concentrates are very potent. They may be smoked, heated with a special type of bong (this is called 'dabbing'), added to food and beverages ("edibles"), or vaped. Using cannabis concentrates produces little, if any, smoke or odor and is therefore easy to conceal.

### WHY THE CONCERN ABOUT YOUTH?

Our brains and bodies are still growing and developing into our mid-twenties. This means that drugs like cannabis affect young people differently than adults. When teens and young adults use cannabis regularly, it can actually change the way their brain works...*permanently*.



### ***Adolescent cannabis use is linked to:***

- Problems with attention, memory, learning, and a lowered IQ.
- Poor school performance.
- Higher risk of developing a substance abuse disorder later in life.
- Increased risk of developing a psychiatric disorder.
- Increased risk of suicide.
- Lung problems and asthma attacks.

Cannabis affects judgment, concentration, reaction time, and coordination in ways that can make users more likely to get into accidents and to engage in risky behavior.



## CHILDHOOD POISONINGS ON THE RISE

Cannabis edibles are easily confused for regular food and beverages. Calls to U.S. poison centers about toddlers and young children getting into edibles and other cannabis products are rising sharply.

*Cannabis affects children differently than adults.* Kids who consume cannabis often need to be cared for in a hospital due to the severity of their symptoms, which can include:

- Hallucinations, confusion
- Extreme sleepiness or inability to stay awake.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Difficulty walking, moving, or speaking.
- Dangerous changes in heart rate.

## PREGNANCY

Cannabis use by mothers during pregnancy or while nursing may be linked to lifelong problems with attention, memory, problem-solving skills, and behavior problems in their children.



## WHAT CAN PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS DO?

Keep cannabis products stored up high, out of the sight and reach of children--just like medicine or other harmful products. Ideally, use an opaque container that locks.

Seek out honest, un-biased information about cannabis and have age-appropriate conversations with children and adolescents. Studies show that this really does have an impact on the decisions they make. Here are 3 great resources to get you started:

**Talk. They Hear You.** (SAMHSA)

**Weed Can Wait.** (The Prevention Coalition)

**NIDA for Teens: Marijuana** (National Institute on Drug Abuse)



WHO CAN HELP? If you think a child has been exposed to cannabis, or if anyone under the influence of cannabis is experiencing unwanted health effects, call The **Blue Ridge Poison Center** right away: **1-800-222-1222**. Specially trained nurses and doctors are standing by day or night to help. Free and confidential.

**Scan the code, save the number. You could save a life.**