

Marijuana: Officer Reference Sheet

LESSON 3

Product Name:

Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol. Cannabis sativa, marijuana, hashish, hashish oil.

Slang:

Weed, Pot, Grass, Reefer, Ganja, Mary Jane, Blunt, Joint, Roach, Nail, Blunt (Blunt refers to a cigar into which marijuana is rolled.)

Effects of Marijuana on Your Brain

- THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) damages the nerve cells in the part of the brain where memories are formed, making it hard to remember things.
- Marijuana affects your self-control. It can seriously affect your sense of time and your ability to do things that require coordination – like driving.
- In 1998, nearly 77,000 people were admitted to emergency rooms suffering from marijuana-related problems. This was an increase of more than 373 percent since 1991.
- Marijuana serves as a barrier against self-awareness, and users may not be able to learn key developmental skills.

Other Health Effects of Marijuana

- Marijuana affects your lungs. There are more than 400 known chemicals in marijuana.
- A single joint contains four times as much cancer-causing tar as a filtered cigarette (tobacco).
- Marijuana can limit your body's ability to fight off infection. It can increase your heart rate and lead to frequent chest colds. Some research even shows that long-term marijuana use can increase the risk of developing certain mental illnesses.
- Marijuana is not always what it seems. Before it is sold, marijuana can be laced with other dangerous drugs without your knowledge. "Blunts" – hollowed-out cigars filled with marijuana – sometimes have substances such as crack cocaine, PCP, or embalming fluid added to them.
- Marijuana can be addictive. As with alcohol and many other drugs, not everyone who uses marijuana becomes addicted, but some users do develop signs of dependence on the drug. Those with psychological dependence can require more of the drug to get the same effect. They may experience withdrawal symptoms such as loss of appetite, sleep problems, weight loss, and shaky hands.
- Among those who have used the drug at least five times, the rates of marijuana dependence are estimated at 20-30 percent.
- Marijuana causes weight gain, increased risk for cancer, lower sperm counts and lower testosterone levels for men, and increased risk of infertility for women.
- For younger users, marijuana can lead to increased anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and other mental health problems. For those already prone to

depression, anxiety attacks, marijuana use may accelerate or exacerbate problems. One study found that adolescents associated social withdrawal, anxiety and depression, attention problems and thoughts of suicide with past-year marijuana use.

Facts About Marijuana Use

- It is illegal to buy or sell marijuana. In most states, holding even small amounts of marijuana can lead to fines or arrest.
- There is NO proof that smoking marijuana is healthy and tons of evidence that it is not healthy. Smoking any substance – tobacco, marijuana, or crack cocaine – increases your risk of developing pneumonia and other illnesses.
- It has not yet been proven that using marijuana leads to using other drugs. But, the fact is very few people use other drugs without first using marijuana. Teens who smoke marijuana are more likely to try other drugs, in part because they have more contact with people who use and sell them.
- Using marijuana or other drugs increases your risk of injury from car crashes, falls, burns, drowning, and other accidents.
- Marijuana affects your judgment; drains your motivation, and can make you feel anxious.
- Research shows that marijuana use is three times more likely to lead to dependence among adolescents than among adults.
- Today's marijuana is more potent and its effects can be more intense. Research shows that the levels of THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) rose from under 2 percent in the late 1970's and early 1980's to just over 6 percent in 2000. Sinsemilla potency also increased, rising from 6 percent in the late 1970's and 1980's to more than 13 percent in 2000. Recent research has also revealed THC levels of 20 percent or higher in some grades due to refined cultivation techniques.

How Can You Tell if a Friend is Using Marijuana? Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be using marijuana:

- Seeming Dizzy, and Having Trouble Walking
- Having Red, Bloodshot Eyes
- Having a Hard Time Remembering Things that Just Happened
- Acting Disinterested in School, Family, or Activities He or She Used to Enjoy.
- Acting Silly for No Apparent Reason
- Mood swings, euphoria
- Slow thinking and reflexes
- Dilated pupils
- Increase appetite
- Dryness of mouth
- Increase pulse rate
- Delusions and hallucinations

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Isn't smoking marijuana less dangerous than smoking cigarettes?

A. No. It's even worse. One joint affects the lungs as much as four cigarettes.

Q. Can people become addicted to marijuana?

A. Yes. Research confirms you can become hooked on marijuana.

Q. Can marijuana help cure cancer?

A. No. Some people with cancer, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases claim to experience relief from pain and other symptoms that they attribute to marijuana use. However, scientific research has not yet confirmed these benefits and more research on this topic is being done. What is known is that smoking marijuana can cause lung damage.

NCADI -- Marijuana and Teens

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, "Keeping Youth Drug Free" 2002.