

Facts about Marijuana

Michael D. McGee, M.D.

1. **Marijuana is not safe.**

Long term use harms the brain, decreasing IQ by an average of 10 points. Marijuana is occasionally mixed with PCP, formaldehyde, codeine cough syrup or crack cocaine. Marijuana causes apathy and makes depressive conditions worse. Marijuana impairs short term memory.

2. **Marijuana harms the body and mind.**

In people with heart disease, the risk of heart attack is 4x greater within the first hour. Marijuana increases the heart rate by 20 to 50 beats a minute. Marijuana can cause weight gain that stresses the heart.

Marijuana's tars and toxins damage the lungs and increase the risk of cancer similar to cigarettes. Marijuana deposits 4 times as much tar in the lungs as cigarettes.

Marijuana can lower testosterone levels, causing mood swings, impotence and infertility.

Marijuana hurts the brain. Marijuana impairs short term memory, judgment, coordination, balance, sense of time, perception and reaction time. This results in impaired job performance, increase risk of motor vehicle accidents and other accidents. Long term use impairs learning and memory at work and school as well as the ability to focus or pay attention.

3. **Marijuana is not legal**

Marijuana is not legal, even though medical marijuana is coming to Massachusetts. While medical marijuana may help some people with serious diseases, it still has the same harmful effects whether it is being used medically or not.

4. **Marijuana hurts unborn babies.**

Marijuana is linked to premature births. Marijuana passes through the breast milk as well.

5. **Marijuana can have psychological effects**

Some people experience panic, anxiety, depression and thoughts of suicide with the use of marijuana. Higher doses can cause hallucinations, delusions and paranoia. Many regular users report depression, loss of motivation and less satisfaction with their lives.

6. **Marijuana can be addictive.**

Regular marijuana users can become physically dependent, need more and more to get high, and continue to use despite how it might be negatively affecting their lives. When trying to quit, users can have withdrawal symptoms such as craving, trouble sleeping, anxiety or loss of appetite.