

Marijuana—Common, Dangerous, and Still Illegal

What You May Not Know

Some people may think that smoking a joint is just a “mellow” way to relax. They don’t realize that using marijuana can cause memory problems reduced concentration and coordination increased appetite decreased inhibitions bloodshot eyes, dry mouth, and dry throat lower testosterone levels and sperm counts in men increased testosterone in women, which can cause acne and increased facial and body hair, paranoia, diminished or complete loss of sexual pleasure psychological dependence so that over time, more of the drug is needed to get the same effect.

Damage

Marijuana smokers face the same cancer risks as tobacco smokers, even though they may smoke only a few joints a day compared to a pack or more of cigarettes. Damage from smoking pot includes deteriorating performance at school or at work experiencing a “burn out” characterized by muddled thinking, acute frustration, depression, and isolation impaired sexual development and fertility, including production of abnormal sperm and menstrual irregularities damage to lungs and pulmonary system (one marijuana joint is equal to approximately 25 commercial cigarettes) exposure to illegal drug culture.

Marijuana Is Still Illegal

While there are groups who encourage the legalization of marijuana, it is still illegal. Depending on where an individual is arrested, penalties for possession, use, and dealing can be harsh. Convicted individuals face fines, possible imprisonment, a criminal record, and lost job opportunities.

Some people are confused about marijuana’s medical uses. There are no medically

accepted uses for smoking marijuana. THC, the active chemical in marijuana, is manufactured into a pill and available with a prescription to treat nausea and vomiting that occur with some cancer treatments and to help people with AIDS gain weight.

Contrary to popular belief, not all teens smoke pot. Only about one in five 10th graders report they used marijuana within the past month. Fewer than one in four high school seniors is a current marijuana user.

Marijuana—pot, reefer, grass, joint, stick, ganja, rope, blunts, smoke, bud, weed, bhang—is one of the most widely used illicit drugs in the United States and very few young people use other illegal drugs without first trying marijuana

Just because it’s common doesn’t mean marijuana is safe. In fact, the marijuana sold today is far stronger than it was two or three decades ago, and far more dangerous.

Don't Lose a Friend to Drugs

Offer to drive for the person who is high or drunk or call your parents or a friend for a ride.

Remind friends that buying or possessing illegal drugs is against the law.

Being arrested and getting a police record may not seem like a big deal now, but could keep you from getting jobs, college loans, or licenses for many professions.

Remind friends that using intravenous drugs places them at risk of getting AIDS and hepatitis.

Take Action

Encourage your school to organize drug-free activities such as: dances, movies, community service projects, walk-a-thons, marathons, etc.—to raise money for charities or local substance abuse programs.

Use plays, songs, and raps to show younger children the consequences of drug abuse.

Urge your school, faith community, or neighborhood to organize an anti-drug rally.

Tell a teacher, your parents, or the police about drug dealers in your school and community. Many areas have phone numbers that let people report these crimes anonymously. Don't ignore the problem by thinking, "that kid will graduate next year" or "they only deal to a few kids." The problem will only get worse.

Talk to school counselors about starting an alcohol or other drug abuse prevention program.

Check with recreation centers, youth clubs,

libraries, or schools to see if they offer after-school activities—classes for you and your friends.

Encourage your school to start intra-mural sports for kids who may not be interested in competing on the junior varsity or varsity athletic teams but still want to play.

Has a friend become moody, short-tempered, and hostile? Does he or she seem out of it or spacey? Is she suddenly cutting classes and hanging out with the "wrong crowd?"

Stop and think about it.

Your friend may have an alcohol or other drug problem.

If a friend acts this way, it is not a guarantee that he or she has an alcohol or other drug problem. You need to compare behavior now to behavior in the past. But it's better to say something and be wrong than to say nothing and find out later that you were right to be worried.

How To Talk to a Friend in Trouble

It is not an easy thing to do. You may feel like your friend will think you are judging him or her. A friend in trouble may very well get mad at you for interfering in his or her business. Although it's not your job to get people to stop using drugs, you can and should express concern as a friend. Only the user can decide to stop. Before you talk to a friend, it may be helpful to know some of facts about drug use.

There are an estimated 1.5 million Americans, ages 12 and older that use cocaine.

Drug-related deaths remain near historic highs.

Current illicit drug use among 8th and 10th graders has more than doubled in the past five years.

Teens who drink alcohol are 7.5 times more likely to use any illicit drug, and 50 times more likely to use cocaine than young people who never drink alcohol.

Think ahead about what you want to say. These tips can help you through the process:

Let the friend know that you care about them.

Plan ahead what you want to say and how you want to say it.

Pick a quiet and private time to talk.

Don't try to talk about the problem when your friend is drunk or high.

Use a calm voice and don't get into an argument.

Ask if there is anything that you can do to help.

Have information about local hotlines and drug abuse counseling and offer to go with him or her.

Don't expect your friend to like what you're saying. But stick with it—the more people who express concern, the better the chances of your friend getting help.

Look for help for your friend. Talk about the situation with someone who knows about drug abuse and helping abusers.

Seek advice from a trusted adult such as a guidance counselor, a teacher, a religious leader or a parent about how to talk to friends who may have a drug problem.

Be prepared for denial by the friend when you talk to him or her about his or her problem. The user may automatically turn

aggressive and defensive.

Keeping Yourself Drug Free- Helps Friends Stay That Way

-Skip parties where you know there will be alcohol or other drugs.

-Hang out with friends who don't use alcohol or other drugs to have fun.

- Get involved in drug-free activities.

-Ask your friends to join.

-Learn how to talk to your peers and younger kids about the dangers of abusing drugs and alcohol. Many communities have programs that teach teens how to counsel their peers about problems that teenagers face, including substance abuse.

-Don't accept a ride from someone who has been drinking or doing drugs. Find someone else to give you a lift.

Additional Signs of Drug or Alcohol Abuse Include

Increased interest in alcohol or other drugs; talking about them,

Talking about buying them.

Owning drug paraphernalia such as pipes, hypodermic needles, or rolling papers

Having large amounts of cash or always being low on cash.

Drastic increase or decrease in weight sometimes slurred or incoherent speech

Withdrawal from others

Frequent lying,

Depression, paranoia.

IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in America, affecting half a million new victims each year. Identity theft or identity fraud is the taking of a victim's identity to obtain credit, credit cards from banks and retailers, steal money from a victim's existing accounts, apply for loans, establish accounts with utility companies, rent an apartment, file bankruptcy, or obtain a job using the victim's name. Thousand of dollars can be stolen without the victim knowing about it for months or even years.

The imposter obtains your social security number, your birth date, and other identifying information such as your address and phone number. With this information and a fake driver's license, they can apply in person for instant credit or through the mail posing as you. They often claim they have moved and provide their own address. Once the first account is opened, they can continue to add to their credibility.

They get the information from your doctor, lawyer, school, health insurance carrier, and many other places. "Dumpster divers" pick up information you may have thrown away, such as utility bills, credit card slips, and other documents.

TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING TO YOU

. Do not give out personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or know whom you're dealing with. Identity thieves will pose as bank representatives, Internet service providers, and even government officials to get you to reveal identifying information.

. Shred all documents, including pre-approved credit applications received in your

name, insurance forms, bank checks and

statements you are discarding, and other financial information.

. Do not use your mother's maiden name, your birth date, the last four digits of your social security number, or a similar series of numbers as a password for anything.

. Minimize the identification information and the number of cards you carry. Take what you'll actually need. Don't carry your social security card, birth certificate, or passport, unless necessary.

. Do not put your social security number on your checks or your credit receipts. If a business requests your social security number, give them an alternate number and explain why. If a government agency requests your social security number, there must be a privacy notice accompanying the request.

. Do not put your telephone number on checks.

. Be careful using ATMs and phone cards. Someone may look over your shoulder and get your PIN numbers, thereby gaining access to your accounts.

. Make a list of all your credit card account numbers and bank account numbers with customer service phone numbers and keep it in a safe place.

. When you order new credit cards in the mail or previous ones have expired, watch the calendar to make sure you get the card within the appropriate time. If the card is not received within that time, call the credit card grantor immediately to find out if the card has been sent. If you don't receive the card, check to make sure a change of address was not filed.

. Do not put your credit card number on the Internet unless it is encrypted on a secured site.

Protecting Your Credit Cards

Having a credit card is a big responsibility. If you don't have your own card, a parent may lend you one for certain purchases. Whether the card is yours or your parents', here are a few tips to keep it safe.

Give your credit card account number out to make a purchase or reservation only when you have initiated the call.

Never give this information over a cellular phone.

Never give your credit card for someone to use on your behalf.

Watch your card when giving it to store clerks to protect against extra imprints being made.

Destroy any carbon papers from receipts. Tear them up—don't toss them into the trash at the purchase counter.

Keep the actual charge slips in a safe place.

Save all receipts and compare them to your monthly statement. Report any differences immediately.

Keep a master list of all your card numbers in a secure place, preferably with your parents or another trusted adult, with all account numbers and phone numbers for reporting stolen or lost cards.

Immediately report lost or stolen cards to the issuing company and to the police.

Enterprising criminals can gather enough information about you through the debris of everyday electronic transactions to pretend that they are you. Once this happens, they can gain access to all your financial information.

The most common way thieves go about getting this information is by stealing your wallet. However, other ways include looking over your shoulder at ATMs and phone

booths to capture your PIN number; stealing mail from your mailbox; digging through your discarded trash; and fraudulently ordering a copy of your credit record.

And before you think, "I don't have a credit record," think again. As soon as you open a bank account, get a credit card or a loan, or start a store account, you've got a credit record.

To prevent this from happening to you, don't give out your social security number. If your state allows it, use a number other than your social security number on your driver's license. tear into small pieces all credit card offers, ATM receipts, bank statements, credit card statements, and other printed materials that have your account numbers on them. Use a paper shredder if possible. don't send personal information over the Internet, through e-mail, or over cellular phones. don't use passwords that are obvious— names (yours or those of your friends, relatives, or pets), birth date, and even street addresses. The best passwords mix numbers with upper and lowercase letters. A password that is not found in the dictionary is even better because there are programs that will try every word in the dictionary in an effort to crack your code. avoid break-ins by changing your password regularly and memorizing it. If you have several, set up a system for remembering them. Don't write your password on your notebook or stick it on a Post-it® note in your locker.

Pay Particular Attention When Using ATM Cards and Credit Cards

One of many conveniences of a checking account is the debit or automated teller machine (ATM) card. This card allows you to get money from your account through a machine 24 hours a day. A money machine is useful, but there are a few precautions you should take. Protecting Your Personal Identification Number (PIN)

Just like passwords on the computers, a PIN

is a confidential code issued to you that lets you have access to your account. Memorize your PIN, and don't give it to anyone, not even family members or bank employees. The fewer people who have access to your PIN, the better. Never write your PIN on your ATM card or write it on a piece of paper and place it in your wallet. If your wallet and card are lost or stolen, someone will have everything they need to take all the money from your account.

off direct mail lists.

Using the ATM Safely

An ATM card should be treated like cash. When using the ATM machine, select one that's code-door or double-door secured and visible to street traffic. Use when others are around. Also, be aware of others waiting behind you position yourself in front of the keyboard to prevent anyone from seeing your PIN.

Pay attention to your billing cycles. Follow up with creditors if bills don't arrive on time. A missing credit card bill could mean an identity thief has taken over your credit card account and changed your billing address.

Cancel all credit cards that you have not used in the last six months. Open credit is a prime target.

Order your credit report at least twice a year. Reports should be obtained from all three major sources: Equifax at 800- 685- 1111; Experian at 888- EXPERIAN (397- 3742); or TransUnion at 800- 680- 7293.

Correct all mistakes on your credit report in writing. Send the letters return receipt requested. Identify the problems item by item and send with a copy of the credit report back to the credit-reporting agency. You should hear from the agency within 30 days.

Write to Direct Marketing Association, Mail Preference Service, PO Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735 to get your name

Lock Crime out of your Home

LIGHTING

Lighting is one of the most cost-effective deterrents to burglary. Indoor lighting gives the impression that a home is occupied. If you are going to be away from your home, consider using automatic timers to switch interior lights on and off at preset times. Outdoor lighting can eliminate hiding places.

Install exterior lighting near porches, rear and side doorways, garage doors, and all other points of entry. Entryways to your home always should be well lighted. Place lights out of reach from the ground so the bulbs cannot be removed or broken. Aim some lights away from the house so you can see if anyone is approaching, or install motion-sensing lights, which turn on automatically as someone approaches.

SHRUBS AND LANDSCAPING

Your home's walkways and landscaping should direct visitors to the main entrance and away from private areas. The landscaping should provide maximum visibility to and from your house. Trim shrubbery that could conceal criminal activity near doors and windows. Provide light on areas of dense shrubs and trees that could serve as hiding places. Cut back tree limbs that could help thieves climb into windows, and keep yard fencing low enough to avoid giving criminals places to hide.

Making your home safer from crime doesn't always mean having to install expensive alarms—effective home security starts with properly locked doors and windows and visible, well-lighted entryways.

EXTERIOR DOORS

All exterior doors should be either metal or solid wood. For added security, use strong door hinges on the inside of the door, with

non-removable or hidden pins. Every entry door should be well lighted and have a wide-angle door viewer so you can see who is outside without opening the door.

LOCKS

Strong, reliable locks are essential to effective home security. Always keep doors and windows locked—even a five-minute trip to the store is long enough for a burglar to enter your home. Use quality keyed knobs as well as deadbolts—deadbolts can withstand the twisting, turning, prying, and pounding that regular keyed knobs can't. When choosing a deadbolt, look for such features as a bolt that extends at least one inch when in the locked position, to resist ramming and kicking; hardened steel inserts to prevent the bolt from being sawed off, and a reinforced strike plate with extra-long mounting screws to anchor the lock effectively. Most deadbolts are single-cylinder; they operate from the outside with a key and from the inside with a thumb latches. Double-cylinder deadbolts require a key to open the lock from both outside and inside your home. These locks are especially effective for doors with glass within 40 inches of the lock—an intruder cannot break the glass and unlock the door by reaching through. Some jurisdictions do not allow these locks—check with your local law enforcement or building code authorities before installing a double cylinder deadbolt. As one alternative, security glazing can be applied to glass panels in or near the door, or shatterproof glass can be installed, though these options can be expensive.

SLIDING GLASS DOORS

Sliding glass doors can offer easy entry into your home. To improve security on existing sliding glass doors, you can install keyed locking devices that secure the door to the frame; adjust the track clearances on the doors so they can't be pushed out of their tracks; or put a piece of wood or a metal bar in the track of the closed door to prevent the

door from opening even if the lock is jimmied or removed.

WINDOWS

Most standard double-hung windows have thumb-turn locks between the two window panels. Don't rely on these—they can be pried open or easily reached through a broken pane. Instead, install keyed locking devices to prevent the window from being raised from the outside, but make sure everyone in the house knows where to find the keys in case of an emergency. Some jurisdictions have restrictions on this type of lock—check with your local law enforcement before you install them. An easy, inexpensive way to secure your windows is to use the “pin” trick. Drill an angled hole through the top frame of the lower window partially into the frame of the upper window. Then insert a nail or eyebolt. The window can't be opened until you remove the nail. Make a second set of holes with the windows partly opened so you can have ventilation without intruders.

Take Crime Prevention to Work

What About Violence in the Workplace?

There are many forms of violence in the workplace, from raised voices, profanity, or sexual harassment to robbery or homicide. Although you hear about homicide most often, that kind of violence is the most extreme and not very common. To assess your workplace's vulnerability to violence ask yourself these questions.

If you work in an office, is it secure?

Do you have easy-to-use phone systems with emergency buttons, sign-in policies for visitors, panic buttons, safe rooms, security guards, good lighting, and safety training?

Are all employees trained on security procedures?

Are you encouraged to report unusual or worrisome behavior?

Is there a clear written policy that spells out procedures in cases of violence and sanctions for violators? Make sure you know whom to report unusual behaviors.

Are there procedures in place to report sexual harassment? Is it clear that violators will be punished and victims will not?

If the answers to these questions are "no," you can approach someone in the personnel department with your concerns.

Employers are liable for any harm that may come to you while you're at work and most of them want to lower the risks. If your employer doesn't take action, look for another job.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse in the Workplace

Drug and alcohol abuse in the work place are problems that affect everyone, not just the abuser. Approximately 68 percent of illegal drug users are employed full- or part-time. There's a good chance that someone where you work abuses alcohol or drugs. Workers who abuse alcohol and drugs are far less productive, miss more workdays, and are more likely to injure themselves or someone else. Employers pass on the costs of drug and alcohol abuse on to other employees through reduced salaries, benefits packages, and privileges. Co-workers often shoulder the burden of filling in for absent or tardy users.

Don't enable a troubled co-worker to continue abusing alcohol or other drugs on the job by ignoring the problem, lying or covering up for him or her, doing his or her job, or lending money.

Talk to your supervisor.

Going to work?

You need to take your street smarts along. Almost any crime that can happen at home or school can happen at work. But common-sense prevention skills can help make your workplace safer. Whether you're working part-time after school and on the weekends, have a summer job, or starting your first full-time job, it's smart and responsible—and mature—to avoid becoming a victim.

Work Sense is Common Sense

Keep your purse, wallet, keys, or other valuable items with you at all times or locked in a drawer or closet. Let your parents know your work schedule, especially if you're going to be leaving work early or staying late. Be sure to let your supervisor know when you are going on a break or leaving the premises, even for a few minutes.

Mark your personal items, such as a radio, CDs, or cellular phone, with your name or initials and an identification number like your driver's license number, if you choose to bring them to work.

Report to maintenance any broken or flickering lights, dim corridors, doors that don't lock properly, and broken windows. Don't wait for someone else to do it. Don't advertise your social life or your family's vacation plans to people at work. Be clear about and always follow official procedures for handling cash. Check with your parents if your supervisor asks that you close up in the evening. If you feel uncomfortable, ask that someone else stay with you. Do not use drugs or alcohol at work or while working. Do not take anything from work. It's theft. You can be fired or arrested. Report any suspicious activity or person immediately. Cooperate if a robber confronts you. Merchandise and cash can always be replaced—people can't.

Trouble Spots

Stairwells and out-of-the-way corridors don't take the stairs alone. Talk to your supervisor or building manager about improving poorly light-ed corridors and stairways.

Elevators—don't get into elevators with people who look out of place or behave in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. If you find yourself in an elevator with someone who makes you nervous, press the next floor button and get off as soon as possible. Also, stand near the emergency phone or button in the elevator.

Restrooms—attackers can hide in stalls and corners. Make sure restrooms are locked and only employees have keys. Be extra cautious when using restrooms that are isolated or poorly lighted.

After hours—don't work late alone. Create a buddy system for walking to parking lots or public transportation or ask security to

escort you.

Parking lots or garages—choose a well-lighted, well-guarded parking garage. Always lock your car and roll windows up all the way. If you notice strangers hanging around the parking lot, notify security or the police. When you approach your car, have the key ready. Check the floor and front and back seats before getting in. Lock your car as soon as you get in—before you buckle your seat belt.

Public transportation—exercise caution when using subways and buses. Wait at well-lighted, busy stops. Sit close to the driver or exit doors. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, tell the driver or subway personnel.

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and

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