



# The Deal with Deal with Marijuana

facts  
on tap

The Facts about Marijuana

# Hold Up.

**Before you dismiss this as just another brochure about marijuana, consider this:**

This brochure was developed together with college students from around the country. We've tried to create a useful resource for college students, not just another booklet about marijuana. We've stuck to the facts on the social, psychological, and biological effects of using marijuana, without judgment, so that you can draw your own conclusions. So please read on...

*"It's just weed.  
It's not like it's heroin or anything."*

You may have heard this before or thought it yourself. But before you decide that marijuana is completely safe, make sure you know all the facts.

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among American college students. According to the 2003 *Monitoring the Future* study, more than half of all college students report having used marijuana at least once in their lives. (Don't forget, this also means that almost 50% have never used. In fact, less than 20% reported using in the last month).

## In this brochure, you'll find:

- Just the Facts: Quiz
- Myth or Fact?
- Getting More Than You Bargained For
- Unintended Consequences
- Marijuana IS Addictive
- How Much is Too Much?
- When to Intervene: How to Help a Friend
- Resources



## Alcohol vs. Marijuana Is one safer than the other?

Not really. They both can result in dependency that requires professional treatment. We do know that **alcohol contributes to liver disease**, but some studies also suggest that a small amount of alcohol (i.e., one glass of red wine a day) can benefit your heart. Experts believe that **marijuana smoking can result in oral cancers** and short-term thinking problems. Though smoking anything is never good for your lungs, we know that it can reduce nausea for people with medical conditions like cancer.

**Even occasional users of alcohol and marijuana may experience negative consequences - such as the risks that come with lowered inhibitions, short-term memory problems, and coordination difficulties.** And both alcohol and marijuana are thought to contribute to (or intensify) mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety.

One major difference worth noting, besides legality, is that it is possible to overdose on alcohol, which can be fatal. And withdrawal from alcohol is more serious medically (can kill you) than withdrawal from marijuana. Plus, because marijuana is an anti-emetic (inhibits vomiting), if taken in combination with alcohol, it can prevent the body's natural tendency to purge a toxin from the stomach.

**MYTH**  
**or**  
**FACT?**

### MARIJUANA AND SEX

Have you and your partner ever considered the effects of marijuana on your relationship? **Has it become a third player in your sex life, or even a crutch?**

For some people, sex is an anxiety-producing proposition, so they use pot to relax. Others use weed to heighten sensitivity. The fact is that heavy, long-term marijuana use can either cause or contribute to low motivation and sex drive. Long-term use of marijuana can also affect sexual health. Marijuana has an effect on the production of testosterone and other hormones, which in turn can cause decreased sperm count, erectile dysfunction, and problems with menstruation.



# Marijuana IS Addictive

Marijuana is widely thought to be less harmful than other drugs, mostly because people incorrectly believe that it is not addictive. But guess what - **more than 100,000 Americans a year seek out drug treatment specifically because of their dependence on marijuana.**

**Physical vs. psychological addiction:** Use of any drug can lead to dependence – marijuana too! People always seem relieved to hear that a substance "just" leads to psychological dependence, or has only minimal physical withdrawal symptoms.

But the fact is, addiction experts today no longer distinguish between psychological and physical dependence. What matters is whether or not a drug causes **uncontrollable, compulsive drug seeking and use, even in the face of negative health and social consequences.** This "drug hunger" at the core of all addiction is much more difficult to control than physical symptoms, many of which can be medically managed.

**"Jonesing":** Craving for marijuana doesn't look like craving for other drugs. But just because a user doesn't resort to violence doesn't make it any less real. It is more subtle, but no less destructive.

**Effects of addiction:** At first, it can be hard to detect the effects of marijuana use on a person's life. But with continued use, the drug starts to take on a special importance. Many long-time users report that after a while, their use of marijuana started to undermine their emotional and psychological growth. It became harder for them to handle stress, and they lagged behind their peers in terms of emotional maturity.

**Withdrawal:** Members of Marijuana Anonymous say that by far, their most common experience when stopping use was insomnia, sometimes lasting as long as a few months. Other common symptoms included depression, nightmares, and vivid dreams. Anger is also common for people who are cutting marijuana out of their life. For some, this plays out as a slow-burning rage. Others report feeling constantly irritable or prone to sudden bursts of anger.