



Marijuana Facts

**FACT: Marijuana is addictive.**

Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main active ingredient in marijuana. It stimulates brain cells to release the chemical dopamine, artificially causing a feeling of pleasure. The “high” feeling it creates is one of the reasons some people use it again and again, which can lead to addiction. And the younger you start, the higher your risk for addiction. About one in six teenagers who smoke marijuana will become addicted.

FACT: Marijuana use can negatively affect your performance in school and athletics.

THC affects many parts of the brain, including those that control memory and movement. Marijuana users may experience the following:

- problems with learning and memory
- distorted perceptions (sight, sound, time, touch)
- impaired motor coordination
- increased heart rate
- loss of interest and motivation

**FACT: Driving under the influence of marijuana is dangerous.**

Safe driving involves good concentration, judgment, and reaction time. Safe drivers must also be alert and have good coordination. Smoking marijuana—and mixing it with even small amounts of alcohol—negatively affects all of these necessary skills. In fact, up to 14 percent of the drivers who die in car accidents have marijuana or both marijuana and alcohol in their bloodstreams.

Think It Through: Considering the scientific facts above, study the following scenarios. Look for marijuana myths and answer the questions on separate paper. Apply facts regarding the dangers present in each situation.

1. Two members of a high school football team are nervous before a big game. A friend gives them a joint and tells them it will help them calm down before the game. What are the risks involved for these two teammates? What about the team as a whole?
2. A young man wants to smoke marijuana with his date before going to a movie. He tells her it will “open her mind” and enhance her understanding of the film. He will be driving her home afterward. What do the facts tell you about the dangers involved in this scenario?
3. A study group gets together to prepare for an important test. During a study break, one member pulls out a joint and offers to share it with anyone who wants to join her. What do the facts tell you about the risks?