

# Easy-to-Read Drug Facts

easyread.drugabuse.gov

## Marijuana (Weed, Pot) Facts

Marijuana is a green, brown, or gray mix of dried, shredded leaves and flowers from the marijuana plant.

Marijuana can be rolled up and smoked like a cigarette (called a joint) or a cigar (called a blunt). Marijuana can also be smoked in a pipe. Sometimes people mix it in food and eat it or brew it as a tea. Smoking oils from the marijuana plant is on the rise. People who use this practice call it "dabbing."

Marijuana can make you feel silly, relaxed, sleepy, and happy—or nervous and scared. It may change your senses of sight, hearing, and touch. Marijuana can make it hard to think clearly.

Some slang names for marijuana are:

- Weed
- Pot
- Grass
- Herb
- Boom

## Sign of Marijuana Use and Addiction

Someone taking marijuana can:

- get dizzy
- laugh for no reason
- have red, bloodshot eyes
- forget things that just happened

Marijuana makes you feel like time is slowing down. Minutes can feel like hours. At the same time, everyday sights, sounds, and tastes may seem really interesting or funny.

Marijuana can make you feel very hungry. You want to eat lots of junk food. Some people call this "the munchies."

People who smoke marijuana often smell like it afterwards. Marijuana smells sweeter than cigarette smoke. A person might use incense, cologne, or perfume to hide the smell.

Some people get addicted to marijuana after using it a lot. They might need to smoke more and more of it to get the same high.



©iStock.com/sale123/iStockphoto.to/2gb39xj



People who are trying to quit using marijuana can:

- be in a bad mood
- feel nervous
- have trouble sleeping

They will feel a strong need to take the drug.

## Effects of Marijuana on Brains and Bodies



©iStock.com/stockdevil/  
[istockphoto.to/2fkjKNE](https://istockphoto.to/2fkjKNE)

Marijuana smoke can hurt your lungs and cause some of the same problems faced by people who smoke cigarettes.

These are just some of the problems marijuana can cause:

### Memory Problems

Marijuana makes it hard to remember things that just happened a few minutes ago. That makes it hard to learn in school or to pay attention to your job. A recent study showed that if you begin regular marijuana use as a teen, you can lose an average of 6 or up to 8 IQ points, and you do not get them back, even if you stop using the drug.

### Heart Problems

Using marijuana makes the heart beat fast and raises your risk of having a heart attack.

### Coughing and Breathing Problems

People who smoke marijuana can get some of the same coughing and breathing problems as people who smoke cigarettes. Marijuana smoke can hurt your lungs.

### Drugged Driving

Driving when you're high on marijuana is dangerous, just like driving drunk. Your reactions to traffic signs and sounds are slow. It's hard to pay attention to the road. And it's even worse when you're high on marijuana and alcohol at the same time.

## You Stop Caring

Over time, people who use marijuana can get "burnt out." They don't think about much or do much. They can't concentrate. They don't seem to care about anything.

## Addiction

Although some people don't know it, you can get addicted to marijuana after using it for a while. This is more likely to happen to people who use marijuana every day or who started using it when they were teenagers.

## What is medical marijuana?

The marijuana plant has chemicals that may help symptoms for some health problems. More and more states are making it legal to use the plant as medicine for certain conditions. But there isn't enough research to show that the whole plant works to treat or cure these conditions. Also, the government still doesn't think of marijuana as medicine, so it's still illegal at the national level.

Two medicines have been made as pills from a chemical that's like the one in the marijuana plant that makes people feel "high." They can treat nausea if you have cancer and make you hungry if you have AIDS and don't feel like eating. But this chemical affects the brain, so it can do things to your body other than just working as medicine. One brain effect is that over time, marijuana chemicals can lower how smart someone is (called IQ). This brain effect could be permanent if you start using marijuana a lot as a teen.

Another marijuana chemical that scientists are studying doesn't make you high. Scientists think this chemical might help kids who have a lot of seizures (when your body starts twitching and jerking uncontrollably). Some studies have started to see if it can help.

Because marijuana is often smoked, it can hurt your lungs. These and other effects on the brain and body could make marijuana medicine more harmful than helpful. Another problem with marijuana as a medicine is that the ingredients aren't exactly the same from plant to plant. There's no way to know what kind and how much of a chemical you're getting.

Scientists are trying to find ways to make safe medicines from marijuana.