

## Talk It Up! Column

### Marijuana Myths and Facts

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Currently 26 million Americans over the age of 12 use marijuana. That's 10% of the population! However, it's not just adults using marijuana. About 50% of twelfth graders have reported that they've used marijuana at least once, and that number only drops to 3 out of every 20 students for eighth graders. With marijuana use being so widespread today, we'd like to address some of the commonly circulated statements related to it.

**True or False?** Oral cannabinoids (such as prescription nabilone and dronabinol) are effective at treating chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.

**True!** Many studies have shown that marijuana and CBD are good treatment options for patients experiencing chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting if traditional medications did not work. While marijuana and CBD are not first-line options, there is still conclusive evidence to support their use in patients going through chemotherapy.

**True or False?** Marijuana is effective for the treatment of chronic pain in adults.

**True!** However, this statement comes with an asterisk. Studies that have included marijuana as a treatment option for pain have all included patients with a *physician-diagnosed* chronic pain illness. Evidence supporting the effectiveness of marijuana in people with a self-diagnosis of chronic pain is limited. In addition, there is substantial evidence that marijuana only has a modest effect on pain.

**True or False?** Cannabidiol (CBD) is effective for improving anxiety symptoms.

**False!** There is limited evidence to support CBD use for improving anxiety symptoms. Some studies have shown that CBD has a positive impact on anxiety as assessed through public speaking tests; however, these studies had significant issues that outweigh the findings. Moreover, some observational studies actually have found an *increased* risk of anxiety symptoms with marijuana use!

**True or False?** Marijuana can help with asthma symptoms.

**False!** While there may be personal accounts of marijuana helping address asthma symptoms, the scientific evidence is not there to support it. In fact, marijuana smoking, similar to tobacco smoking, does worsen respiratory symptoms and can cause more frequent chronic bronchitis episodes, especially with long-term smoking. Bottom line, putting any foreign substance into your lungs can have harmful effects on your health, no matter what it is.

**True or False?** Marijuana use does not increase the risk of a car crash.

**False!** Marijuana use does increase the risk of having a car crash. Some people may think that this has to do with being under the influence of many different substances at once. However, even when studies took out all other factors (including other substances),

marijuana use alone was still related to a significantly increased risk of being involved in a car crash.

**True or False?** When a mother uses marijuana while pregnant, there are no negative effects on the baby.

**False!** Maternal marijuana smoking can cause many harmful effects to a baby. There is substantial evidence that maternal marijuana smoking is associated with a lower birth weights for infants, which can have implications on the baby's health for the rest of its life. However, much more research is needed to find out the extent of other health effects maternal marijuana smoking has on an infant.

**True or False?** Marijuana can be used to treat depression and other mental illnesses.

**False!** There is limited evidence that marijuana is effective in treating depression. In fact, marijuana use is associated with a small increased risk of developing depression. Marijuana use is also associated with an increased risk of being diagnosed with schizophrenia and other psychoses. Frequent marijuana users are at the highest risk.

As marijuana becomes more discussed in our community, having knowledge on the benefits, as well as the risks, is essential. Are you curious to learn more? Check out some resources below:

- Bose J, Hedden SL, Lipari RN, Park-Lee E, Tice P. Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); 2018.
- Child Trends. Marijuana Use. 2018. <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/marijuana-use>.
- Committee on the Health Effects of Marijuana: An Evidence Review and Research Agenda. Cannabis: Prevalence of Use, Regulation, and Current Policy Landscape : The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids. National Academies Press; 2017.
- Whiting PF, Wolff RF, Deshpande S, et al. Cannabinoids for Medical Use: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. JAMA. 2015;313(24):2456–2473. doi:10.1001/jama.2015.6358