

*Myth:* **There is not much parents can do to stop their children from experimenting with marijuana**

*Fact:* Parents are the most powerful influence on their children when it comes to drugs. By staying involved and knowing what their kids are doing, setting limits with clear rules and consequences parents can increase the chances of their children being drug-free.

*Myth:* **The government sends otherwise innocent people to prison for casual marijuana use.**

*Fact:* Many persons sentenced for marijuana possession were initially charged with more serious crimes but were able to negotiate reduced charges or lighter sentences.

#### **How you can help**

- \* Educate yourself about the dangers of marijuana
- \* Help kids in trouble with marijuana get into drug treatment programs
- \* Be an advocate



### **Help & Shelter**

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# MARIJUANA



## A GATEWAY DRUG

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## What is Marijuana

Marijuana, the most often used illegal drug in this country, is a product of the hemp plant, *Cannabis sativa*. The main active chemical in marijuana, also present in other forms of cannabis, is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). Of the roughly 400 chemicals found in the cannabis plant, THC affects the brain the most. Marijuana is one of three gateway drugs, the other two are alcohol and tobacco.



## Other Names:

Weed, pot, reefer, grass, dope, ganja, Mary Jane, sinsemilla, herb, Aunt Mary, skunk, boom, kif, gangster, chronic, 420

## What does it look like?

Marijuana is a green or gray mixture of dried, shredded flowers and leaves of the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa*).

## How is it used?

There are several ways in which people use marijuana, and the way in which it is used determines the amount of chemicals transferred into the body.

### ⇒ Cigarette

Also called a **joint**, dried marijuana buds are rolled into a cigarette. Approximately 10 percent to 20 percent of the THC is transferred into the body when smoking a joint.

### ⇒ Cigar

Some users slice open a cigar, remove the tobacco and refill it with marijuana. The marijuana-filled cigar is often called a **blunt**.

### ⇒ Pipe

You've probably seen people smoke pipes of tobacco, but these pipes are also used to smoke marijuana. About 40 percent to 50 percent of the THC is transferred into the body when using a pipe.

### ⇒ Bong

These are water pipes that typically have a long tube rising out of a bowl-shaped base. Water pipes trap the smoke until it's inhaled, raising the amount of THC taken in.

### ⇒ Food

Marijuana is sometimes baked into foods, such as brownies, or brewed as tea.

## Short-term effects

- ≡ Sleepiness
- ≡ Difficulty keeping track of time,
- ≡ Impaired or reduced short term memory
- ≡ Reduced ability to perform tasks, requiring concentration and coordination
- ≡ Increased heart rate
- ≡ Potential cardiac dangers
- ≡ Blood shot eyes
- ≡ Dry mouth and throat
- ≡ Decrease social inhibitions
- ≡ Paranoia, hallucinations

## Long term effects

- φ Enhanced cancer risks
- φ Decrease in testosterone levels and lower sperm count for men
- φ Increase in testosterone levels for women and increased risk of infertility
- φ Diminished or extinguished sexual pleasure
- φ Psychological dependence requiring more of the drug to get the same effect

