Marijuana: The Basics
Myths, Facts and Risks of Marijuana Use for College Students

Nationally and at NDSU, marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among college students, and the number of students using marijuana nationally has increased in recent years.

Results of the 2010 National CORE Alcohol and Other Drug Survey show 18.1% of college students across the country report using marijuana in the past 30 days, and 31.3% report using marijuana in the past year.

At NDSU, the 2012 CORE data show 9.5% of students have used marijuana in the past 30 days, and 21.7% have used in the past year.

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<th>Marijuana Use In Past Year %</th>
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Facts About Marijuana Users at NDSU

*NDSU students who use marijuana, either frequently (twice/month or more) or infrequently (once/month or less in the past year), typically experience negative consequences at much higher rates than students who do not use marijuana.*

- Of NDSU marijuana users, 31.7% are frequent (F) users, and 68.3% are infrequent (I) users
- 89.6% of marijuana users report using alcohol more than once per month in the past year
- Marijuana users are **much more prone to use tobacco** (F: 64.2%, I: 49.6%) than non-users (17.2%)
- Marijuana users account for **virtually all other illicit drug use** (Rx drugs, amphetamines, etc.)
- Marijuana users exceeded non-users in **all drinking behaviors**, including frequency of use, number of drinks consumed, underage consumption, and binge drinking
- Binge drinking rates are almost **twice as high** for marijuana users (F: 83%, I: 81.4%) than non-users (44.7%)
- The average number of drinks per week for frequent users (12.9) is **more than three times** that of non-users (4.1) and one and a half times that of infrequent users (8.8)
- Marijuana users report **twice** as many incidents as non-users of driving under the influence, missing a class, experiencing memory loss, getting hurt/injured, getting into a fight or argument, and performing poorly on a test/project
- Marijuana users report **three to four** times as many incidents as non-users of getting in trouble with authorities, damaging property, seriously thinking about suicide, unsuccessful attempts to quit, and thinking they might have a drinking or drug problem
Myths & Facts About Marijuana

Myth #1: Marijuana is harmless

Fact: Use of marijuana can cause significant health, safety, social and learning problems. Short-term effects of marijuana use include anxiety, memory loss and trouble thinking and concentrating.

College students who use marijuana frequently have reported increased memory loss, missing days of work or class, difficulty sleeping, procrastination and lower productivity. Effects such as these may be especially problematic, as these impairments can lead to poor academic performance.

Smoking marijuana also increases heart rate and, depending on conditions, can either raise or lower blood pressure, causing additional risk for those with cardiovascular disease.

Myth #2: Marijuana is NOT addictive.

Fact: Recent research shows that use of marijuana can lead to physical dependence. Heavy users of marijuana may develop withdrawal symptoms, such as irritability, anxiety and difficulty sleeping, when they have not used the drug for a period of time. Furthermore, many people may develop a social dependence on marijuana and continue to use it, regardless of how the drug interferes with other activities and relationships.

Myth #3: Marijuana is not as harmful to your health as tobacco

Fact: While the co-occurrence of marijuana and tobacco smoking is high and makes differentiating between their individual negative effects difficult, research has shown that smoking ONE marijuana joint has the same impact on an individual’s large lung airways as smoking 16 tobacco cigarettes.

Additionally, marijuana smoke contains between 50-70% more cancer-causing chemicals than the levels found in tobacco smoke. Smoking marijuana has been clearly linked to respiratory problems.
Myth #4: Driving high is safer than driving drunk

Fact: Driving under the influence of marijuana is not safer than driving under the influence of any other intoxicating substance. Habitual marijuana use is strongly associated with car crash injury in general, and this is particularly true when marijuana is used prior to driving.

Marijuana affects alertness, concentration, perception, coordination and reaction time – essential skills required for safe driving. Even moderate doses of marijuana have been shown to reduce reaction time, requiring an additional 139 feet to stop a vehicle at highway speeds.

Myth #5: Smoking pot just makes you mellow... no one ever gets hurt using marijuana.

Fact: While marijuana is a depressant drug, research at NDSU has shown that individuals who use marijuana regularly are much more likely than non-users to engage in violent or destructive behavior, including getting into fights and damaging property.

Increased frequency of marijuana use is also associated with a greater likelihood of suffering from a range of other mental health problems, including anxiety and panic disorders.

Myth #6: Marijuana is used to treat cancer and other diseases

Fact: Marijuana is listed as a Schedule I controlled substance in the United States, which means it is recognized as a dangerous drug that has no medical value. However, some states have removed criminal penalties for possessing marijuana for “medical” use.

Preliminary research has shown that THC, the primary active chemical in marijuana, may be useful for treating a range of medical symptoms, just as the synthetic THC product, Marinol, available by prescription, is used to control nausea and stimulate appetite in people with various medical conditions. However, research is limited in this area due to the mixed results of some studies, which detail unintended consequences of use, contra-indications for use, and lack of consensus regarding proper dosage and the efficacy of marijuana compared to other drugs. Due to this lack of consensus from the medical research field, endorsement of marijuana as an effective treatment is not supported at this time.
Myth #7: It is not a big deal if I get caught with marijuana.

Fact: As a Schedule I controlled substance, marijuana is illegal in the United States. Possession of marijuana or drug paraphernalia for marijuana are considered misdemeanors, and delivery of marijuana or intent to deliver within 1,000 feet of a school (including a university) are class B felonies. Penalties for these crimes range from a $1,000 fine and 30-days imprisonment for a class B misdemeanor to a $10,000 fine and up to 10 years’ imprisonment for a class B felony.

Students caught with marijuana will also be required to go through the university judicial process and will face additional sanctions, which may include removal from on-campus housing. Furthermore, students who have been convicted of possession or sale of a controlled substance, such as marijuana, while receiving financial aid will become ineligible to receive financial aid for at least one year, and possibly indefinitely.

For more information, contact:

NDSU Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention
701.231.5478
NDSU.Prevention@ndsu.edu
www.ndsu.edu/alcoholinfo

NDSU Counseling Center
Ceres Hall 212
701.231.7671
www.ndsu.edu/counseling

References

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