

MARIJUANA

◆ CONCERNING YOUR HEALTH ◆

A DANGEROUS DRUG

Marijuana (also known as weed, grass, hash, or reefer) is a dangerous drug made from the dried leaves and flowering tops of the Indian hemp plant called *Cannabis Sativa*. Marijuana contains more than 400 chemicals, more than 60 of which are found in no other plant. One of these dangerous chemicals called THC is thought to impair brain function and produce the "high" that marijuana sometimes gives. In the 1960's, marijuana contained about 3% THC. Today, more potent varieties of marijuana are being grown which contain up to 15% THC. Marijuana is also much more dangerous now because drug pushers often mix in PCP (Angel Dust) or other deadly drugs which may cause permanent brain damage.

Marijuana is made from the leaves and stems of the hemp plant. It may be made into small blocks called "hash" (or "hashish") and may also be made into an oil called "hash oil." Marijuana users either smoke or eat these products, but no matter how marijuana enters your body, its harmful chemicals enter the bloodstream and are carried throughout the body.

EFFECTS AND HEALTH HAZARDS

The immediate effects of marijuana use may include both physical and psychological reactions. The immediate reactions may include a dreamy relaxed state or a feeling of panic, dread and extreme fear. Other effects may include faster heart beat, bloodshot eyes, dry mouth and throat, chest pain, altered sense of time/distance orientation, forgetfulness, inability to think, difficulty in concentrating, slow reflexes, impaired coordination, and increased accidents.

The long term effects of marijuana use are not completely known. Studies have shown that marijuana may cause damage to the immune system. Marijuana seems to weaken our ability to fight infection by interfering with special cells called "helper T cells." When helper T cells can't do their work, our bodies can't fight off bacteria, viruses, or cancer cells. Lung damage is also found in marijuana users, probably due to the very hot smoke of marijuana being held in the lungs for up to half a minute.

Marijuana has more than 150 cancer causing chemicals and more than

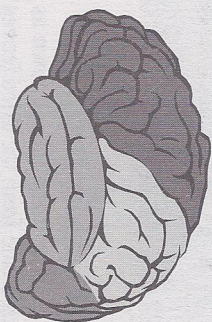
twice the tar found in tobacco cigarettes. More than 100 of the chemicals inhaled in marijuana smoke are very irritating to the delicate tissues of our lungs, causing emphysema, shortness of breath, difficult breathing, and precancerous growths. Marijuana often contains mold and other disease causing organisms which may cause severe or even fatal lung infections.

Permanent brain damage is another problem associated with marijuana use. Marijuana alters the neurotransmitters and increases the gap between nerve cells in the brain. Marijuana also interferes with a person's judgment, thinking, and coordination, making it difficult to remember even simple things or to do simple tasks. People who use marijuana become easily confused and often lose interest in school, their work, and their friends.

Both men and women have been known to experience hormonal abnormalities as a result of marijuana use. Marijuana reduces the male hormone testosterone in men. Without testosterone, males will not develop strong muscles and will not be able to have an erection. In females, the effect is just the opposite. Marijuana increases the normally small amount of testosterone in women's blood which can disrupt normal menstrual cycles.

Marijuana use makes pregnancy more difficult by reducing the sperm count and sperm activity in males and by interfering with ovulation in females. Even when conception occurs, marijuana is known to interfere with cell division and growth of the fetus. If a nursing mother uses marijuana, the THC can be passed to her baby through breast milk and may cause permanent damage to male babies.

Human Brain



MARIJUANA AND THE LAW

In nearly every country there are severe laws prohibiting the use of dangerous drugs. In the United States, surveys among high school students indicate that marijuana use is declining as more young people learn about the harmful effects of this drug. If you use dangerous drugs, it can be difficult to stop. Don't give up! You can conquer drug use! Better yet, don't ever start!



SAY NO TO DRUGS!

