



PLUS How to Spot the Signs

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It's Not 'Just Weed'

*Marijuana, Psychosis,
& Adolescents at Risk*

It's official: Marijuana use is on the rise, and adolescents are especially at risk. What once was seen as a harmless rite of passage has become a billion-dollar industry of potent narcotics capable of triggering psychotic episodes.

It's important to understand that the weed you may have smoked in the past is not the same drug that your children are now facing. From 1995 to 2014 alone, the DEA found that the potency of marijuana tripled. By 2021, one study reported that cannabis was a clear factor for increased risk of psychosis among adolescents and earlier onset of psychosis, as well. Now more than ever, it's important to understand the risks of marijuana use — and the signs.

Marijuana *in 2023*



While marijuana has always carried a stigma, it has often been labeled a “gateway drug” — possibly leading to harder drugs but carrying few risks on its own. Unfortunately, the hard reality of modern marijuana is just now coming into focus. Thanks to legalization, commercialization, and advances in chemistry, marijuana today is much more potent — and thus much more dangerous to the developing teenage brain. Growing operations are creating incredibly powerful strains of weed, and even adding “extracts,” a scientifically synthesized concentration of all the mind-altering chemicals into a single source. The proliferation of these strains and extracts means that when your child is trying marijuana for the first time, they’re experimenting with something far beyond their comprehension — and the effects from this can be devastating.





Marijuana Use & *Psychosis*

A growing body of research continues to outline the risks of modern marijuana use in children, adolescents, and young adults. The underlying belief is that the adolescent brain, undergoing all its vital development during that age, is particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of cannabis. When you factor in the overwhelming potency of today's marijuana, the risks become much greater — including the risk of psychosis.

There is definitive causal evidence for marijuana's role in triggering psychotic episodes and schizophrenia, especially if the person is genetically predetermined for developing psychotic disorders. Adolescents who are already prone to psychosis may use marijuana as a means of self-medication. Both heavy use and an increase in the regularity of use have been linked to psychotic episodes.

Adolescents smoking pot are gambling with their future — even if they don't know it. It's important to talk with your child about marijuana use. If they feel drawn to smoking or vaping marijuana or communicate that they feel like it helps them manage their anxiety, consider having them meet with a mental health specialist for an assessment.



5 Signs of *Marijuana Abuse*

1. Young adults who use marijuana may experience changes in their behavior and mood. They may become more irritable, anxious, or depressed. They may also display a lack of motivation or energy, which can affect their school or social life.
2. Physical symptoms of marijuana use can include red, bloodshot eyes; dry mouth; changes in appetite; and slower reaction times. Adolescents may also experience memory problems, difficulty concentrating, and impaired coordination.
3. Adolescents who use marijuana may become more secretive about their activities. They may start to isolate themselves from friends and family and spend more time alone. They may also hide their drug use by keeping drug paraphernalia or stashes of marijuana hidden from view.
4. Marijuana use can affect a teenager's ability to concentrate and remember information, leading to a decline in academic performance. It can also impair coordination and reaction time, affecting athletic performance.
5. Adolescents who use marijuana regularly may develop a dependence on the drug, leading to signs of addiction. They may experience withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, restlessness, and insomnia when they stop using the drug. They may also continue to use marijuana despite negative consequences, like a decline in their academic or athletic performance.

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What's *Next?*

Whether or not you suspect your child is using marijuana, make an effort to talk about it with them. Scare tactics rarely work, but the best thing you can do is to create open, honest lines of communication. Maybe start by asking them what they have heard about marijuana, or if they know friends who smoke or vape.

Cultivate a loving environment for your child in which they feel safe to talk with you and vice versa. There are real consequences to marijuana use, so if you suspect an issue, or your child admits one, handle it head-on before there is a possibility for it to escalate.

When in doubt, reach out for help. Stonewater Adolescent Recovery Center can act as your guide and help you find a course of action that feels right for your entire family. For more information and free resources, visit our website.