

# PREVENTION TALK

## TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT MARIJUANA

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**H**ow would you respond to this statement?  
 Smoking marijuana is no more harmful than smoking cigarettes.

Research tells us that smoking marijuana is four times more likely to cause cancer than smoking cigarettes. Marijuana, or Cannabis, is a mind-altering



(psychoactive) drug that contains delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol or THC (the main active chemical) as well as 400 other chemicals. Marijuana also contains chemicals such as ammonia, acetone, and carbon monoxide.<sup>1</sup>

The marijuana today is more potent than the marijuana 10, 20 and 30 years ago.<sup>1</sup> In the 1960s marijuana contained 10 mg. of the active THC. Marijuana today contains upwards of 150 mg. To enhance the effects of marijuana, the joints are often dipped in embalming fluid (formaldehyde and ammonia) and PCP. This combination increases the risk of harmful reactions such as hallucinations and delusions. Many teens do not know the embalming fluid found on the streets contains PCP so the risk is increased because they have no idea what they are consuming.<sup>2</sup>

### REMEMBER

*It is important as parents to get the facts. TALK to your teen(s). You can make a difference!*

Youth report increasing pressure to use marijuana at increasingly early ages. One survey found that adolescents 12-17 years of age named “drugs” as the number one problem they face growing up.<sup>3</sup>

### TO THINK ABOUT...

- Youth who learn from parents or caregivers about the risks of drug use are 30% less likely to smoke marijuana.<sup>2</sup>
- Your first TALK should not be your last. The pressures that contribute to a young person’s decision to experiment with drugs continues into early adulthood.
- Smoking five joints per week puts as much cancer causing chemicals in the body as smoking a full pack of cigarettes every day.<sup>1</sup>

### ACTION STEPS:

- Learn about the risks/effects of smoking marijuana and communicate them to your teen.<sup>2</sup>
- Clarify your own point of view and clearly state your expectations to your teen.
- Find out what your teen thinks about drug use.
- Celebrate with your teen frequently when they make healthy no use choices.

For more information call:

### SOURCES CITED:

- <sup>1</sup>Wu, T.C., Tashkin, D.P., Djahad, B., & Rose, J.E. (1988). Pulmonary hazards of smoking marijuana as compared with tobacco. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 318, 347-351.
- <sup>2</sup>National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2002, October). *Marijuana: Facts for teens* (NIDA Publication No. 713). Rockville, MD: Author.
- <sup>3</sup>National Institute on Drug Abuse. (1998). *National survey results of drug use: Monitoring the future, Vol. 1/Secondary school students* (National Institute of Health Publication No. 98-4345). Rockville, MD: Author.