



DRUG FACT SHEET

Marijuana

Marijuana is the most widely available and used illegal drug in the U.S.



Marijuana is one of the oldest psychoactive plants. The first direct reference to cannabis as a psychoactive agent dates back to 2700 B.C.

- Class of drug:** Cannabis
- Main active ingredient:** THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), which causes the mind-altering effects
- What it looks like:** Greenish-gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds and flowers of Cannabis sativa, the hemp plant
- Street names:** Pot, Grass, Weed, Reefer, Dope, Mary Jane, Sinsemilla, Acapulco Gold, Thai Sticks, Ganga
- How it is used:**
 - Smoked in hand-rolled cigarettes (joints), water pipes (bongs) or cigars (blunts)
 - Eaten in foods or used to brew tea
 - Concentrated into a resin called hash oil that is made with butane and other flammable chemical solvents. Hash oil is usually smoked in vaporizers or e-cigarettes
- Duration of high:**
 - Smoked**—effects begin immediately after the drug enters the brain and last from one to three hours
 - Ingested**—effects begin one-half to one hour after ingested and last as long as four hours
- Withdrawal symptoms:** Irritability, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, depression
- Detected in the body:**
 - Occasional use**—one to seven days
 - Chronic use**—one to four weeks
- Effects:**
 - THC concentrations in marijuana are much higher today than in the past causing harsher effects leading to psychosis, hallucinations and more hospitalizations
 - Physical**—increased heart rate, bloodshot eyes, dry mouth and throat, increased appetite
 - Mental**—pleasant sensations and colors, intensified perception of sounds, impaired or reduced short-term memory and comprehension, altered sense of time, reduced ability to perform tasks requiring concentration and coordination
 - Long-term**—damage to the tissue of the lungs and pulmonary system, cancer, negative effect on the development of adolescents, impaired immune system

U.S. information

In 2015, 31.9 percent of 12th graders viewed regular use of marijuana as harmful, while 6 percent reported daily marijuana use. In 1995, 60.8 percent of 12th graders viewed regular use of marijuana as harmful, while 4.6 percent reported daily marijuana use.

In 2015, 7.5 percent of high school students in the United States reported that they tried marijuana for the first time before the age of 13. Approximately 39 percent of students said they had used marijuana at least once in their lifetime, compared to 42 percent two decades ago.

(Monitoring the Future Survey; U.S. Center for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015)

Sources: American Medical Association, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Drug Abuse Warning Network, 2002 and 2003 National Survey on Drug Use, The Office of National Drug Policy-Drug Policy Clearinghouse, American Counsel for Drug Education