

# HEALTH ALERT!

## Marijuana: It May Be Riskier Than You Think

(NAPSA)—Every day more than 3,000 American youth try marijuana for the first time. More kids use marijuana than any other illicit drug by far. Three-fourths of current illicit drug users use marijuana, according to the latest National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.

Many parents don't worry about their kids using marijuana, because they used it and think they turned out fine. But times change and so has marijuana. It is more potent now and can lead to a host of significant health, social, learning and behavioral problems at a crucial time in a young person's development.

Today's marijuana is more potent and its effects can be more intense. Research shows that levels of THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) rose from under two percent in the late 1970s and early 1980s to up to seven percent today.

For young users, marijuana can lead to increased anxiety, panic attacks, depression and other mental health problems. Using marijuana can interfere with academic success because of its effects on memory and concentration.

Getting high impairs judgment, which can also wreak havoc on teens in high-pressure social situations, leading to risky decision-making on issues like sex, criminal activity or riding with someone who is driving high.

Regular marijuana users often develop breathing problems including chronic coughing and



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wheezing. One marijuana joint contains as much cancer-causing tar as four tobacco cigarettes.

Kids can also become dependent on marijuana. More teens enter treatment each year with a primary diagnosis of marijuana than for all other illicit drugs combined. Sixty percent of teens currently in drug treatment are there because of marijuana.

What can parents do? Studies show that parents are the single most powerful influence in their children's lives. Parents who are involved and talk to their kids about drugs are less likely to have kids who use drugs.

For more information about marijuana, visit [www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com), the parent Web site of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, or call 1-800-788-2800 for a free copy of *Wake Up to the Risks of Marijuana: A Guide for Parents*.