

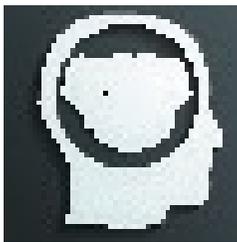


## Use Among Teens

In America, marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug by teens as well as adults. The public debate over the drug's legal status and widespread acceptance of medical marijuana may contribute to a reduced perception of its potential risks among young people. In addition, some teens believe marijuana is harmless because it's "natural" or have the mistaken idea that it's not [addictive](#).

In fact, marijuana can be addictive, and approximately 10 percent of users develop a marijuana use disorder, characterized by continued use in spite of negative consequences, leading to problems with health, school, work, and relationships. Research shows that teens who begin using marijuana before age 18 are four to seven times more likely than adults to develop a marijuana use disorder.

Marijuana use among adolescents has also been linked to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. In addition, some studies suggest that in people with a genetic risk for developing schizophrenia, teen marijuana use may increase the risk for developing psychosis, and at an earlier age.



## Effects on the Teen Brain

Generally neuroscientists agree that the human brain is not fully mature until a person's mid-twenties, with impulse control, logical thinking, and complex planning skills reaching their peak at age 25. Just as alcohol use is thought to negatively impact the developing brain, so can [marijuana use](#).

In the short term, marijuana use impairs attention, learning, memory, and decision-making among teens. Heavy marijuana use in the teen years is associated with poor school performance, greater unemployment, and lower life satisfaction, although whether the drug is to blame -- or other social and environment factors -- is an open question.

The adolescent brain may be particularly sensitive to damage from drug

exposure. The earlier a person begins to use drugs, the more likely it is he/she will develop a substance use disorder, among other serious life problems.

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**Are you concerned about a friend or family member's alcohol or drug use? If you, or someone you know, is interested in addiction recovery services, mental health care for children or adults, or primary care, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.**



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