

# QUESTIONS

## What is marijuana?

Marijuana is a mind altering substance produced from a plant with the scientific name Cannabis sativa. The drug is used because its primary active chemical, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), may induce relaxation and heighten the senses.



## What does it look like?

Marijuana generally refers to the dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds and flowers of the cannabis plant. The mixture typically is green, brown or gray in color and may resemble tobacco. While lower quality marijuana usually includes all parts of the cannabis plant, higher quality marijuana often is composed only of the buds and flowering top of the plant.

## How is it used?

Users typically smoke marijuana as a cigarette, known as a joint, or in a pipe or bong. The drug also is smoked using blunts – cigars that have been hollowed out and refilled with marijuana, sometimes in combination with other drugs such as crack cocaine. Marijuana also has been mixed with foods or brewed as a tea.

## Is marijuana illegal?

# YES



Alaska State Trooper canine Yukon sits with packaged marijuana and guns seized from a bust.



## Alaska State Troopers

Alaska Bureau of Investigation

Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit

<http://www.dps.state.ak.us/ast/abade/>

### Drug Hotlines:

Anchorage 1-800-478-3325

Bethel 1-800-478-9112

Kotzebue 1-800-789-3222

Soldotna 1-877-260-3784

### For more information on illicit drugs

National Institute on Drug Abuse:

[www.drugabuse.gov/](http://www.drugabuse.gov/)

National Drug Intelligence Center

[www.usdoj.gov/ndic/](http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/)

Marijuana Addiction Info:

1-800-405-8409

# MARIJUANA



# QUESTIONS, MYTHS AND FACTS

Information in brochure provided by:



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS  
ALASKA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION -  
STATEWIDE DRUG ENFORCEMENT UNIT

AND

NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE (NIDA)

# FACTS

## Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug.

According to the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an estimated 100 million Americans aged 12 or older have tried marijuana at least once in their lifetimes, representing 40.6% of the U.S. population in that age group. The number of past year marijuana users in 2007 was approximately 25.1 million (10.1% of the population aged 12 or older) and the number of past month marijuana users was 14.4 million (5.8%).

### Other consequences of marijuana use:

- Marijuana smoke contains 50-70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than tobacco smoke. Using marijuana may promote cancer of the respiratory tract and disrupt the immune system.
- Long-term use of marijuana may increase the risk of chronic cough, bronchitis, and emphysema, as well as cancer of the head, neck and lungs.
- Mentions of marijuana use in emergency room visits have risen 176 percent since 1994, surpassing those of heroin.
- Marijuana can cause the heart rate, normally 70-80 beats per minute, to increase 20 to 50 beats per minute, or in some cases, even to double.
- Marijuana users have more suicidal thoughts and are four times more likely to report symptoms of depression than people who never used the drug.
- THC, the main active chemical in marijuana, changes the way sensory information gets into and is processed by part of the brain that is crucial for learning and memory.
- Americans spent \$10.6 billion on marijuana purchases in 1999.
- On the federal level, nearly 98 percent of the 7,991 offenders sentenced for marijuana crimes in 2001 were guilty of trafficking. Only 2.3 percent, or 186 people, were sentenced for simple possession of marijuana.



# IN ALASKA

Demand for Alaskan-grown marijuana continues to be high as a result of its exceptional THC content. Because Alaskan produced marijuana is extremely high quality; Alaska is considered a marijuana exporting state. However, there is also a significant market for "BC Bud" brought into Alaska from British Columbia. ABADE teams continue to find extremely sophisticated indoor growing operations. Most commercial marijuana growing operations are found in communities along Alaska's road system. The Mat-Su Valley area continues to lead the state in identified and eradicated marijuana grows followed by Fairbanks and the Kenai Peninsula. It is not unusual for sites to be located in homes with hidden or underground rooms specifically designed for the cultivation of marijuana. These rooms are often equipped with surveillance cameras and state-of-the-art timers controlling temperature, lighting, water, humidity and air purifiers. Many grows are found during and/or after fires. Also many lease/rental and abandoned houses are damaged by the remodeling and humidity of a grow operation. In some parts of the state, the local economy is directly affected by the influx of money from illegally produced marijuana.

### « Marijuana seized by ABADE »

2005	2006	2007
105 pounds	763 pounds	145.47 pounds

### « Marijuana related charges/arrests »

#### « by ABADE »

2005	2006	2007
706	1,132	1.108

# MYTH

## Marijuana is harmless.

Marijuana harms in many ways, and kids are the most vulnerable to its damaging effects. Use can lead to significant health, safety, social and learning or behavioral problems. Short-term effects include memory loss, distorted perception, trouble with thinking and problem-solving and anxiety. Other impairments observed in frequent marijuana users involve sensory and time perception and coordinated movement, suggesting use can adversely affect driving and sports performance. Smoking marijuana leads to changes in the brain similar to those caused by cocaine, heroin and alcohol. All disrupt the flow of chemical neurotransmitters



# MYTH

## Marijuana is not addictive.

Some heavy users of marijuana develop withdrawal symptoms when they have not used for a period of time. The desire for marijuana exerts a powerful pull on those who use it, and this desire, coupled with withdrawal symptoms, can make it hard for long-term smokers to stop using the drug. Marijuana use has been shown to be three times more likely to lead to dependence among adolescents than among adults. Research indicates that the earlier kids start using marijuana, the more likely they are to become dependent on this or other illicit drugs later in life.



# MYTH

## Marijuana makes you mellow.

Not always. Research shows that kids who use marijuana weekly are nearly four times more likely than non-users to report they engage in violent behavior. In one study, researchers looking into the relationship between ten illicit drugs and eight criminal offenses found that a greater frequency of marijuana use was associated with a greater likelihood to commit weapons offenses. Except for alcohol, none of the other drugs showed such a connection. That study also found a link between marijuana use and the commission of attempted homicide and reckless endangerment offenses.

