

Fact or Myth?

MYTH: “Pot never killed anyone.”

FACT: Marijuana is linked to tens of thousands of car accidents each year. Marijuana smoke has the same cancer causing chemicals as tobacco and causes respiratory damage.

MYTH: “I drive better when I’m high.”

FACT: Marijuana affects alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time—all skills required for safe driving. Data shows that people who are high show the same lack of coordination on drunk driving tests as do people who’ve had too much to drink.

MYTH: “Marijuana is a natural herb, and things that come from the ground are ok.”

FACT: Arsenic and belladonna are naturally occurring also and quite lethal. Tobacco and alcohol are naturally occurring products and both have caused great harm to our society. Just because something comes from the ground doesn’t mean it is safe.

The Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse is a community coalition administered by the Bernards Township Health Department.

The Municipal Alliance provides consultation, programs, training and resources to members of the Bernards Township community with the goal of preventing and reducing the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. For

more information, visit



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The Truth About Marijuana:



Empowering Smart Decisions



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The Unhealthy Perception of Marijuana

There are many resources out there that send mixed messages about marijuana, some websites say its not that bad, some say its very harmful. Some people say that they drive better while high, it helps them to calm down and concentrate, and relax, its not like they are smoking cigarettes. Others counter that it causes driving accidents, lower academic and athletic performance, and acts as a gateway to other drugs. When it comes to your kids, what should you believe and how are you supposed to know what's truth versus myth?

The Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse has created this pamphlet to help you navigate among all the information that's floating out there and give you **The Truth About Marijuana.**

According to the 2009 American Drug & Alcohol Survey, taken by Bernards Township students, **51%** of seniors have tried marijuana at least once in their lives, and **28%** have used the drug in the past month, compared to the national average of **19%**.

What are the effects of Marijuana?

Short Term:

- Problems with memory and learning
- Distorted perceptions of sights, sounds, time, etc.
- Trouble thinking and problem solving
- Loss of motor coordination
- Increased heart rate

Long Term:

- Cancer: studies show smoking 5 joints per day may be the same as smoking an entire pack of cigarettes, taking in the same cancer-causing chemicals
- Respiratory Problems: Coughing, wheezing, chest colds, greater risk of pneumonia
- Weakened immune system: marijuana impairs the body's ability to fight off infections

FACT: Marijuana is up to ten times stronger today than in the 1970s or 1980s. Stronger marijuana means stronger effects.



Legalization

Medical marijuana states not only have the highest rates of marijuana use among youth but also the **youngest age of onset in the country.** Legalizing marijuana for medical purposes sends an unacceptable message to youth that drugs are not bad.

Furthermore, smoking has been shown to be an ineffective and inefficient way of administering a medicinal drug. Dr. Robert DuPont, former director of NIDA, says, "There is no acceptable role in modern medicine for using burning leaves as a drug delivery system because **smoke is inherently unhealthy.**" Smoking marijuana causes tar and other unhealthy compounds to be delivered directly to the lungs. Other methods of delivery are no better. Vaporizing or eating the drug results in the same dangerous compounds being delivered to your body systems.



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