



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley



www.RAYSAC.org

Marijuana Safer Than Tobacco? **Know the Facts!**

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2009, 16.7 million Americans aged 12 or older used marijuana at least once in the month prior to being surveyed, an increase over the rates reported in all years between 2002 and 2008.

Numerous studies have shown marijuana smoke to contain carcinogens and to be an irritant to the lungs. In fact, marijuana smoke contains 50-70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than tobacco smoke. Marijuana users usually inhale more deeply and hold their breath longer than tobacco smokers, which further increase the lungs' exposure to carcinogenic smoke.

Marijuana smokers can have many of the same respiratory problems as tobacco smokers, such as daily coughing and phlegm production, more frequent acute chest illness, and a heightened risk of lung infections. A study of 450 individuals found that people who smoke marijuana frequently but do not smoke tobacco have more health problems and miss more days of work or school than nonsmokers. Many of the extra sick days among the marijuana smokers in the study were for respiratory illnesses.

A number of studies have shown an association between chronic marijuana use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia. Some of these studies have shown age at first use to be an important risk factor, where early use leads to increased vulnerability to problems later in life.

Marijuana Use/Abuse Facts:

- Leads to changes in the brain, similar to those caused by alcohol and other drugs
- Leads to lung damage which could be permanent
- Can lead to mental health problems
- Interferes with ability to operate a motor vehicle
- Leads to risky behaviors
- Affects learning and academic achievement

Parents, talk to your teens... they will listen!

(source: NIDA National Institute on Drug Abuse)