



TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT CANNABIS

Parents are the #1 influence on underage substance use - meaning you play a major role in whether or not your kids use cannabis (marijuana, hashish, weed, pot, edibles, etc.) You can help prevent underage use by starting the conversation about cannabis with your children and making sure they are aware of potential consequences. Here are some important facts you should know about cannabis and some tips for talking to your kids.

CANNABIS CAN AFFECT YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE



BRAIN

Human brains do not fully develop until our mid-20s. Individuals who regularly use marijuana before then may experience physical changes that can permanently impact their memory, learning, and attention.¹



LUNGS

Like tobacco, smoking cannabis can harm your lungs. Marijuana smoke has many of the same toxins and chemicals found in tobacco smoke and, when inhaled, can increase the risk of developing lung problems.^{2,3}



DRIVING

Weed can negatively affect the skills that are needed to drive safely, including reaction time, coordination, and concentration. All of which increase the risk of getting into a car crash.^{9,10}



MENTAL HEALTH

Regular marijuana users are significantly more likely than nonusers to develop long-lasting mental disorders, including schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, and suicide.^{4,5} Individuals with a family history of mental illness are at even higher risk.^{6,7,8}

SUCCESS

Research shows that teens who start using before 18 or who use cannabis regularly may be at higher risk for:

- Skipping classes¹¹
- Getting lower grades¹²
- Dropping out of school¹³
- Unemployment or having less fulfilling jobs later in life^{13,14}



TEENS DON'T THINK IT'S DANGEROUS

In 2017, about 1 in 5 high-schoolers in Illinois reported using cannabis in the past 30 days.¹⁵ However, most teens do not believe cannabis is harmful. Around 50% of Illinois high school students reported believing using cannabis 2-3 times a week was not risky.²²



TIPS ON TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT WEED

Cannabis use among youth is not recommended. Children who learn about the possible consequences of drug use from their parents are significantly less likely to use drugs.¹⁷ While they may seem like they're not listening, studies show that kids who have supportive parents, teachers, and other adults are less likely to use cannabis and illegal drugs.¹⁸

TALK OPENLY, EARLY, AND OFTEN ABOUT THE RISKS OF USING CANNABIS

- Start the conversation with your children as young as 10 years old, BEFORE they are likely to consider experimenting with weed or begin asking questions about it.¹⁹
- Look for organic opportunities to discuss cannabis, such as driving past a dispensary with your kids or watching a character use weed on television.
- Keep it casual, as a formal family meeting or sit-down lecture may make them nervous.¹⁹

BE POSITIVE, STAY ENGAGED AND ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS

- Focus on the facts and discuss how cannabis use might affect them.
- Listen carefully and without judgment to their questions and thoughts.
- Having a genuine conversation lets your children know that they can come to you when they have questions or problems.

SET GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

- Teens are less likely to use cannabis when parents set clear limits and house rules.²⁰
- Be clear in telling your children not to use cannabis products until they are of age.

BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

- Embrace the fact that this conversation may feel awkward for both of you.
- Remember you are a role model to the children and teenagers in your life and they are more likely to use cannabis if you do.²¹





RECOGNIZING IF YOUR CHILD IS USING CANNABIS¹⁵

Look for dramatic shifts in behavior and physical appearance such as:

- Red eyes
- Lack of coordination
- Mood swings
- Acting secretive
- Acting silly with excessive giggling
- Shifts in their relationships - either spending more time alone or with different friends
- Loss of interest in sports or other favorite activities
- Skipping school
- Changes in grades and sleeping habits
- Short-term memory loss

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS USING CANNABIS¹⁸

- Stay calm - overreacting may lead your child to rebel, feel resentment, or take greater risks.
- Talk about your concerns and give positive reasons for wanting your child to stop using cannabis.
- Keep the conversation open for problem-solving.
- Remind your child of the ground rules you set earlier or set new ground rules and consequences.
- If needed, seek help from other adults and resources in your community.
- Call 911 and get help if there is a medical or mental health emergency.

To learn about how cannabis use can affect your own health as an adult, check out **Using Marijuana** on LetsTalkCannabisIL.com.

If you have additional questions regarding non-medical marijuana use in Illinois, please email letstalkcannabisIL@prevention.org.



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