

Parents and Prevention

Dear Parents,

It has come to the attention of my office that we are seeing an increase in the number of students that are in possession of marijuana laced items that can be potentially very dangerous if consumed. We have had a few incidents this school year where students have had adverse reactions when consuming these items. These items include cookies, brownies and chewable gummies. The Bridgeport Public Schools would like to provide you with some general information regarding marijuana consumption.

Parents can help their children learn about the harmful effects of marijuana use. Talking to your children about marijuana at an early age can help them make better choices and may prevent them from developing a problem with marijuana use later. Begin talking with your child in an honest and open way when they are in late elementary and early middle school. Youth are less likely to try marijuana if they can ask parents for help and know exactly how their parents feel about drug use.

Tips on discussing marijuana with your child:

Ask what they have heard about using marijuana. Listen carefully, pay attention, and try not to interrupt. Avoid making negative or angry comments.

Offer your child facts about the risks and consequences of smoking marijuana.

Ask your child to give examples of the effects of marijuana. This will help you make sure that your child understands what you talked about.

If you choose to talk to your child about your own experiences with drugs, be honest about why you used and the pressures that contributed to your use. Be careful not to minimize the dangers of marijuana or other drugs, and be open about any negative experiences you may have had. Given how much stronger marijuana is today, its effect on your child would likely be much different than what you experienced.

Explain that research tells us that the brain continues to mature into the 20s. While it is developing, there is greater risk of harm from marijuana use.

Sometimes parents may suspect that their child is already using marijuana. The following are common signs of marijuana use:

- Acting very silly and out of character for no reason
- Using new words and phrases like "sparking up," "420," "dabbing," and "shatter"
- Having increased irritability
- Losing interest in and motivation to do usual activities.
- Spending time with peers that use marijuana
- Having trouble remembering things that just happened
- Carrying pipes, lighters, vape pens, or rolling papers
- Coming home with red eyes and/or urges to eat outside of usual mealtimes
- Stealing money or having money that cannot be accounted for



DRUG ALERT: MARIJUANA EDIBLES

Brownies are among the most common food products infused with marijuana, however, almost any food product may be infused with marijuana and eaten.

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA EDIBLES?



- Psychotic episodes
- Hallucinations
- Paranoia
- Panic attacks
- Impaired motor ability

Effects of Marijuana

Many teenagers believe that marijuana is safer than alcohol or other drugs. When talking about marijuana with your child, it is helpful to know the myths and the facts. For example, teenagers may say, "it is harmless because it is natural," "it is not addictive," or "it does not affect my thinking or my grades."

However, research shows that marijuana can cause serious problems with learning, feelings, and health.

Short-term use of marijuana can lead to:

- School difficulties
- Problems with memory and concentration
- Increased aggression
- Car accidents
- Use of other drugs or alcohol
- Risky sexual behaviors
- Worsening of underlying mental health conditions including mood changes and suicidal thinking
- Increased risk of psychosis
- Interference with prescribed medication

Regular use of marijuana can lead to significant problems including Cannabis Use Disorder. Signs that your child has developed Cannabis Use Disorder include using marijuana more often than intended, having cravings, or when using interferes with other activities. If someone with Cannabis Use Disorder stops using suddenly, they may suffer from withdrawal symptoms that, while not dangerous, can cause irritability, anxiety, and changes in mood, sleep, and appetite.

Long-term use of marijuana can lead to:

- Cannabis Use Disorder
- The same breathing problems as smoking cigarettes (coughing, wheezing, trouble with physical activity, and lung cancer)
- Decreased motivation or interest which can lead to decline in academic or occupational performance
- Lower intelligence
- Mental health problems, such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, anger, irritability, moodiness, and risk of suicide