MARIJUANA: Get the Facts

Natural, but not harmless.
• Marijuana use contributes to health problems
• It is four times stronger than in the 1980s
• It is risky no matter how you use it (smoking, vaporizing, or edibles [food containing marijuana])
• Heavy use in young adults can cause lasting damage to the brain and decrease intelligence
• Marijuana can directly worsen symptoms of anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia

Marijuana can be addictive.
• Marijuana use can lead to addiction, just like with other drugs
• 4.5 million people in the U.S. are addicted
• The chances of addiction are increased in adolescents (17%) and people who use every day (25-50%)
• Withdrawal symptoms include cravings, trouble sleeping, anxiety, and appetite loss

Marijuana use impairs driving.
• Using marijuana doubles a driver’s risk of an accident
• Using marijuana with alcohol increases the risk of an accident

Legal does not mean safer.
• Marijuana is not FDA-approved
• There may be some chemicals in marijuana that help a range of illnesses or symptoms, but there is not enough research that shows marijuana’s benefits
• The benefits do not outweigh the health risks

Marijuana and pregnancy.
• Marijuana use during pregnancy affects child development
• Health risks for the child include low birth weight; premature birth; problems with attention, memory, and problem solving; and reduced IQ

Using marijuana with other substances.
• Mixing marijuana and alcohol increases risk for nausea and reactions of panic, anxiety, or paranoia
• People who smoke both marijuana and tobacco have more health problems
• Mixing tobacco and marijuana increases risk of developing respiratory diseases and/or cancer

Tips for Cutting Back

Think about changing.
• Why do you use? What do you like about it?
• Why do you want to cut down or stop?

Plan for the change you want.
• Set a goal and date for changing your use. Make it realistic.
• Share your plan with people you trust and ask for support.

Act on your decision.
• Distract and do something. Make a list of fun activities (not related to your marijuana use) and keep busy.
• Delay. Stop and think before using. Wait 15 minutes to ride the craving, and the wave of desire may pass.
• Plan ahead. Avoid high-risk situations and people who use.

Have a back-up plan.
• If you haven’t achieved your goal yet, that’s okay.
• Consider the situation in which you used and see what could be changed next time.
• Review your plan and see if it needs revising.

Helpful Links:
http://easyread.drugabuse.gov/marijuana-effects.php
http://www.drugfree.org/drug-guide/marijuana

Relaxation Alternatives:
3-Minute Breathing Space: http://umurl.us/GUi
Breathing and Relaxation Exercise: http://umurl.us/AMF
Body Scan Meditation: http://umurl.us/B0dyScan

MARIJUANA: Effects on the Body

- Problems with coordination, judgment, learning, memory, reaction time, sensory perception, sleeping
- Cancer of the head and neck
- Respiratory problems, asthma attacks, infections, emphysema
- Increased blood pressure and heart rate, risk of heart attack
- Weight gain, weakened immune system, chronic fatigue
- Panic/anxiety, depression, paranoia, lack of motivation, mood swings
- Increased blood pressure and heart rate, risk of heart attack

**During pregnancy:** less oxygen to fetus; premature birth; drug via placenta, umbilical cord, and breast milk; low birth weight; early lung problems

**In men:** low sex drive, low testosterone, low sperm production, erectile dysfunction, increased breast growth, testicular cancer

**In women:** low sex drive, irregular periods, fertility problems

**Cancer of the head and neck**