



MARIJUANA PEDIATRIC EXPOSURE PREVENTION

CLINICAL GUIDANCE FOR COLORADO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS



FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AGES 9-20

It is illegal for Colorado youth under the age of 21 to purchase, possess or use retail marijuana. Despite serious consequences for youth if they break the law, a recent survey found that about 5% of middle school students and 20% of high school students in Colorado report using marijuana in the last 30 days.

Tips for using this guidance: all information in italics is scripted talking points to share with parents.

SCREENING QUESTIONS



Now that marijuana is legal in Colorado, we recommend asking all adolescents and young adults about marijuana use. This should be done in addition to asking about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use (including prescription drugs), as well as other safety measures such as seat belt or bike helmet use.

- *Do any of your friends or classmates or anyone in your home use marijuana?*
- *Have you ever thought about trying marijuana?*
- *Have you ever used marijuana?*

If yes:

- *When was the last time you used?*
- *What form of marijuana do you use (smoking, edibles, vaping)?*
- *How often do you use and how much?*
- *How does marijuana help you?*

If concerned about substance use disorder:

Use an appropriate screening tool, such as the Cannabis Use Disorder Identification Test (CUDIT-R) or the CRAFFT, and referral recommendations found in the Health Care Provider Resources section.

Some youth may self-medicate with marijuana, alcohol or other drugs. If youth report regular marijuana, alcohol or drug use, consider screening them for mental or behavioral health issues and refer for treatment as appropriate.



TIPS FOR PROVIDERS

Start the conversation about marijuana use early with young adolescents and continue to address it with them as they get older.

Of the 38% of Colorado high school seniors who say they ever used marijuana, more than one-third first tried it before age 15.

Four out of five high school students do not currently use marijuana.

It is easier for youth to say no to peer pressure if they do not think “everyone” is doing it. Tell youth that most kids do not use marijuana.

Engage youth in open conversations.

Engage youth in an open conversation about marijuana. Listen carefully and non-judgmentally and provide age-appropriate and fact-based answers. Building a positive rapport while discussing risk behaviors with youth can help them make healthier decisions.

How you talk to youth is important.

Consider using motivational interviewing or screening, brief intervention, referral to treatment (SBIRT) techniques in your conversations with adolescents. For more information on these techniques, please see the Health Care Provider Resources section.

TALK WITH PATIENTS ABOUT HEALTH EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA USE



Brain development continues until age 25. Talk about how marijuana can harm their developing brains.

Language for patients:

- *Tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the chemical in marijuana that makes you “high.” THC affects your brain.*
- *Your brain is still growing (until you are 25), so protect it from marijuana.*

Different forms of marijuana, including vaping, dabbing and edibles, also contain THC that can harm the developing brain.

Language for patients:

Some people think that using a vape pen or eating marijuana is safer than smoking marijuana. But marijuana in any form contains THC, which can be harmful to your brain.

Adolescents and young adults who regularly use marijuana are more likely than non-users to have impairment of cognitive and academic abilities for at least 28 days after last use.

Language for patients:

- *Marijuana can make it harder for you to learn, even weeks after quitting use. Problems with learning are worse the more marijuana you use.*
- *If you use marijuana regularly you are more likely to have a hard time learning, problems remembering and lower math and reading scores.*

Adolescents who regularly use marijuana are less likely than non-users to graduate from high school.

Language for patients:

If you use marijuana regularly, you may be less likely to graduate from high school.

Marijuana and Other Substances: Adolescent and young adult marijuana users are more likely than non-users to increase their use and to become addicted to marijuana in adulthood.

Language for patients:

If you start using marijuana now you are more likely to become addicted in the future and it will be harder to stop using marijuana.

Adolescent and young adult marijuana users are more likely than non-users to use and be addicted to alcohol, tobacco or other illicit drugs in adulthood.

Language for patients:

If you use marijuana, alcohol, or other drugs may be more likely to continue using later in life. This can affect your ability to reach your goals.

Talk to patients about the dangers of mixing alcohol and marijuana.

Language for patients:

It is not safe to mix alcohol and marijuana. Drinking alcohol and using marijuana at the same time is more dangerous than using either on its own.



Talk about how using marijuana can get in the way of their goals.

Ask about their dreams and help them connect with what they need to achieve their goals. Be honest. Explain how doing well in school and staying out of trouble can help them reach their goals.

Language for patients:

Marijuana can make it harder for you to do well in school, play sports or do anything else that requires your brain. Because marijuana is illegal for anyone under the age of 21, it can also make it harder to get (or keep) a job or your driver's license if you are caught using marijuana. This can make it harder for you to reach your goals.

There are consequences if youth use marijuana.

It is illegal for youth under the age of 21 to purchase, possess or use retail (recreational) marijuana. Youth can get a Minor in Possession charge which can lead to fines, public service, required substance abuse education,

loss of driver's license and misdemeanor or felony charges. Many employers do drug testing, so marijuana use can make it difficult for youth to find employment. Because marijuana is still illegal outside of Colorado, marijuana charges also can affect their ability to get federal financial aid to help pay for college.

Language for patients:

- *Marijuana is illegal for anyone under the age of 21. There can be criminal consequences for marijuana possession or use by anyone under the age of 21.*
- *You should also know that many employers still do drug tests, and if you test positive for marijuana or any other drug, it could hurt your ability to get or keep a job.*
- *If you use marijuana and drive, you could get a DUI or lose your driver's license.*



SECONDHAND SMOKE

Marijuana is included in the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act, which requires indoor areas such as workplaces, restaurants, bars and hospitals to be smoke-free.

Language for patients:

- *Smoke is not good for your lungs. Smoke from marijuana has many of the same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco smoke.*
- *A smoke-free environment is safest and healthiest for everyone. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home or around you.*



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DRIVING AND MARIJUANA

Colorado law specifies that drivers with five nanograms/ml of active THC in their whole blood are considered to be driving under the influence (DUI). In Colorado, it is illegal to use marijuana in a vehicle and the open container law applies to marijuana.

Language for patients:

- *Marijuana can affect your ability to make decisions. These effects can last 8 hours or longer after using, even if you don't feel high anymore.*
- *Being high or even buzzed can make some activities more dangerous. Driving a car while high or buzzed is not safe for the driver or the passengers.*
 - *Do not drive if you are high, buzzed or under the influence of marijuana, alcohol or other drugs. You can get a DUI if you use marijuana and drive.*
 - *Do not ride in a car if the driver is under the influence of marijuana, alcohol or other drugs.*
 - *Even activities like riding a bike or scooter while high or buzzed are not safe. You can also get a DUI if you use marijuana before riding a bike or scooter.*
- *Make a plan with a parent or an adult you trust to always have a safe ride available if you need one.*



ACCIDENTAL INGESTION/USING TOO MUCH



Adolescents or young adults may choose to experiment with marijuana, use it regularly or be given it unknowingly by peers. If an individual accidentally ingests a marijuana-infused product or uses too much marijuana, symptoms may include: extreme confusion, anxiety, panic or paranoia, fast heart rate, hallucinations or delusions or severe nausea or vomiting.

It is important to consider the possibility of recent marijuana use if you are seeing a teen with altered mental status or any of the above symptoms.

If a patient experiences symptoms, call the Poison Control Hotline for free, fast, expert help: **1-800-222-1222**. **If the symptoms are severe, call 911 or send them to an emergency room.**

Language for patients:

- *If you or someone you know eats or drinks marijuana by accident or on purpose, it can make you feel sick. You may feel very confused, anxious, panicked or feel paranoid. You may also have a faster than normal heart rate, nausea or vomiting or have hallucinations or delusions.*
- *If you are worried or feeling sick, talk to an adult and call the poison control hotline as soon as possible. Calling is free and you will be helped quickly: **1-800-222-1222**. **If symptoms seem bad, call 911 or go to an emergency room right away.***

Calling for help in case of any drug or alcohol emergency can save lives.

Colorado law protects people from some criminal charges, such as low-level drug possession, use charges or minor in possession, if they call 911 or seek help in a medical emergency. Stay with the person and cooperate with police and emergency medical responders.

TALKING TO PATIENTS: ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT MARIJUANA



Even though marijuana is natural, natural products can be dangerous or poisonous.

Not all natural substances or plants are safe. Tobacco and poisonous berries are great examples. Marijuana contains THC, which can have harmful effects on brain development in youth, including problems with learning, memory and school performance.

Legal does not mean safe.

Think about alcohol or cigarettes. Both are legal to use for adults, but can have serious health risks. Marijuana use also has risks even though it is now legal for adults 21 years and older. Being legal does not make marijuana safe, especially for youth.

Many medicines, including medicinal marijuana, may have harmful side effects.

Doctors can recommend medical marijuana for certain medical conditions when they decide the benefit of treatment is greater than the risk for side effects. Talk to your primary healthcare provider about treatment choices that have the lowest risks and side effects.



RESOURCES

For health care providers:

- If concerned about substance use disorder: Cannabis Use Disorders Identification Test (CUDIT-R)
- Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment Guidance from SBIRT Colorado
- For more information on motivational interviewing and resources: motivationalinterviewing.org
- For Colorado specific substance use treatment referral information:
 - [1-800-CHILDREN/1-866-LAS-FAMILIAS](tel:1800CHILDREN)
 - linkingcare.org
- Colorado Mandatory Reporter Training: coloradocwts.com/community-training
- For age specific tips on talking to youth and example talking points, visit: SpeakNowColorado.org (HableAhoraColorado.org in Spanish)
- For marijuana patient factsheets and clinical guidance documents, visit the CDPHE Marijuana Health Care Provider Resource page: colorado.gov/cdphe/marijuana-clinical-guidelines

For parents/guardians:

- Be sure you know Colorado's marijuana laws, visit GoodToKnowColorado.com
- For more information on marijuana in Colorado, visit Colorado.gov/marijuana (includes Spanish language resources)
- For age specific tips on talking to youth ages 9-20 and example talking points, visit SpeakNowColorado.org (HableAhoraColorado.org in Spanish)
- For more information on keeping kids safe from alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, prescription medications and other drugs, visit SmartChoicesSafeKids.org
- Call 1-800-CHILDREN/1-866-LAS-FAMILIAS for free to connect to statewide resources for parents with any concerns, including substance use.

For adolescents:

- Be sure you know Colorado's marijuana laws, visit GoodToKnowColorado.com.
- For more information on marijuana in Colorado, visit Colorado.gov/marijuana (includes Spanish language resources)
- For more information about marijuana for teens, visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse

REFERENCES: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee's Report: Monitoring the Health Concerns Related to Marijuana: 2016 colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/retail-marijuana-public-health-advisory-committee



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