



Maine Source

Mission: A collaborative community effort to increase overall community capacity for advocacy, education, guidance, and resources for families to promote drug and alcohol-free youth

Winter 09 Issue

Marijuana: the Other Cigarette

What would you say if you're driving your child home from school and she looks at you and asks, "Did you ever smoke pot when you were a kid?" Unless the answer is a definite "No", it may be difficult to know what to say. However, it's best to be honest; otherwise, you risk losing credibility with your child.

While that doesn't mean going into details about your high school or college experiences, it does give you an opportunity to talk with your child about making healthy choices. Even if you made mistakes in the past be clear you don't want your child to repeat them.

During your discussion, you can talk about reasons not to use marijuana.

1. Marijuana puts kids at risk. It **affects the brain** and can impair mental health, leading to increased depression and anxiety.
2. Kids who use marijuana regularly show a **decrease in academic achievement**. Even short-term use has been shown to cause problems with memory, learning and problem solving.
3. Today's **marijuana is more potent**. The level of THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) has increased significantly from the 1970's.
4. Driving under the influence of **marijuana affects the skills needed to drive safely**: alertness, concentration, coordination, and the ability to react quickly.
5. Smoking marijuana causes many of the **same respiratory complications as smoking tobacco**,

including coughing, frequent chest colds, and increased risk for cancer. The amount of tar and carbon monoxide from marijuana is approximately 3-5 times greater than smoke from tobacco.

There are even more reasons to talk with your kids. According to the 2009 Illinois Youth Survey, seventeen percent (17%) or more than 880 Maine Township High School students said they smoked marijuana in the past 30 days.

And when asked, "*How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they smoke marijuana once or twice a week?*" students responded...

Grade in School	Those who said NO RISK of harm
9 th	10%
10 th	13%
11 th	14%
12 th	18%

While a conversation about marijuana use may be uncomfortable, research shows that **kids are less likely to use drugs if their parents talk to them about not using**.

For more information on marijuana, visit www.theantidrug.com/drug_info. Then select MARIJUANA.

Holiday Tips for Parents

The holidays are almost here. For teens, that means time off from school, family gatherings and parties. Here are some tips for parents to help keep kids safe during the holiday season.

- Know who they're with, where they're going and when they'll be home. Check on them -- because you care -- not because you don't trust them.
- Use local curfew laws to set a reasonable time for them to be home. Check your city's local ordinance for details or see www.mcyaf.com/curfew_information.htm.

- Call other parents to ensure they will be home and will monitor activities when your child goes to a friend's house.
- Make sure alcohol is not accessible to children in your home. Ask other parents if it will be accessible in theirs.
- Talk to your children about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs. Use your time together over the holidays to start a conversation with them.

Need more information? Check the MCYAF web site at www.mcyaf.com/tips.htm.

No If's, And's or Butts

First, the good news. Kids are listening and getting the message about cigarettes. The percentage of teens in Maine Township High Schools who smoked during the past 30 days decreased since 2008.

Now for the bad news. Somewhere across America every day, nearly 3500 children light up for the first time.

Parents can influence whether their children start smoking. **Talk to them about not smoking cigarettes and the reasons why.** Need the facts? Try these:

- **Nicotine is addictive.** Once you start smoking, it is very difficult to stop.
- **Tobacco causes cancer** for the smoker and through second hand smoke. The U.S. Surgeon General said so more than 40 years ago. The only thing that's changed since then is the mounting evidence to back it up.
- **Cigarette smoking kills** approximately 400,000 people in the U.S. every year. It is the leading preventable cause of death in our country.
- **Tobacco affects children's normal development** because their bodies are still growing and changing.
- **There are 200 known poisons** in cigarette smoke.
- **Other physical effects** of smoking include wheezing, coughing, bad breath, smelly hair and clothes, yellow-stained teeth and facial wrinkles.

- **Smoking causes shortness of breath and dizziness.** This can affect your child, especially if she/he plays sports.
- **It is illegal** for anyone under the age of 18 to buy and use tobacco products.

In the 2009 Illinois Youth Survey, students in Maine Township schools were asked, "*How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to smoke cigarettes regularly?*"

Students who answered VERY WRONG:

6 th grade	95%	10 th grade	84%
8 th grade	92%	12 th grade	70%

So, parents, **keep talking to your kids from middle school through the high school years about not smoking.** Teens tell us that parents are the #1 reason why they choose not to use tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. You may want to use TV shows, movies, and magazine ads that glamorize smoking as reasons to start a conversation with them. And remind them that in our community *most teens don't smoke.*

For more information, see Tips for Teens: The Truth About Tobacco at: www.ncadi.samhsa.gov. Type in the word "tobacco" in the Advanced Search box.

What percent of teens would you estimate DON'T SMOKE cigarettes...40%? ...60%? ...80%?

Since the start of the school year, students at all three Maine Township High Schools have seen teachers and support staff wearing buttons, posters in the hallways, and participated in activities during lunch related to not smoking.

At one school, for example, buttons with "86%" represent the percentage of students who choose NOT to smoke. This is according to results of the 2009 Illinois Youth Survey administered to more than 5,000 high school students in Maine Township.



Since 2008, all three high schools show a **7-8% increase in the number of students who report NOT smoking.**

The latest research shows that teens get hooked on nicotine more quickly than adults, even in extremely low levels. And nearly all first use of tobacco occurs before high school graduation. So if kids don't start smoking by age 18, odds are they never will.

Who Knew? Now YOU know, so you can talk with your teens about not smoking.

Read more about ***10 Ways to Keep Teens Smoke Free*** at: www.mayoclinic.com/health/teen-smoking/HQ00139.

Contact Peggy Brosnan with MCYAF at (847) 858-8907 or socialnorms@mcyaf.com for information about MCYAF's social norms marketing campaign in Maine Township schools.

Member of:



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