

IN GOOD Health

ROCHESTER'S HEALTHCARE NEWSPAPER

GVHEALTHNEWS.COM

AUGUST 2023 • ISSUE 216

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Legalizing Marijuana Has Not Eliminated Health Risks

Just the facts, know the risks

By Jennifer Faringer

As marijuana dispensaries begin to open across New York state, some view this as a business opportunity.

However, it's important to have the facts and know the potential health risks and impact on our communities, our families and our youth. Legal does not equal safe. Marijuana remains an addictive drug.

With the legalization of marijuana comes a corresponding decline in the perception of risk which has been shown to result in an increase in use, especially among youth. Marijuana is often the first drug teens try, but it is typically not the last.

- While teens report using marijuana to cope with anxiety and depression, more and more studies are showing that using marijuana only worsens both.

- Smoking or vaping marijuana damages lung tissue similar to tobacco use. Studies have also shown that marijuana decreases the body's ability to fight infection thus weakening the immune system.

- With the potency of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in marijuana increasing from 1% to 4% in the 1960s to now 20% to 90% (as found in concentrated forms), the risk increases.

The effects of marijuana when ingested are not felt as quickly as when smoked or vaped. For those ingesting edibles intentionally, this delayed reaction often leads to taking more to feel the expected effect and may result in effects ranging from drowsiness and lethargy to loss of muscle coordination, agitation and irritability, and confusion.

Edibles continue to be a growing concern as reports point to increasing instances of pediatric poisonings due to children accidentally ingesting marijuana-laced food products and

candy which are often packaged in a way that can be indistinguishable from actual food products. With children under age 3, the impacts of pediatric poisoning are often critical and may include respiratory depression and seizures.

There is also a risk to public safety when we consider the probable increase in drugged driving. Driving while impaired is illegal no matter what substance is being consumed. In New York, it is illegal for both the driver and passengers to use marijuana. Individuals under the influence of marijuana may feel focused and in control, but are instead experiencing narrow fixation of focus, a decrease in peripheral vision and a slowed reaction time. After alcohol, marijuana is the most frequently identified drug in deadly crashes. Impaired or drugged driving jeopardizes the safety of all who travel on the roads and highways.

As marijuana potency increases, the risk of becoming addicted has also increased. It is no surprise that marijuana is often the number one reason teens seek treatment. Despite legalization, marijuana remains an addictive drug with health risks.

For more information and a wide range of resources for parents and the community, visit the website awareness page at: <https://ncadd-ra.org/resources/awareness-campaigns/marijuana>.

To schedule a presentation contact jfaringer@depaul.org.

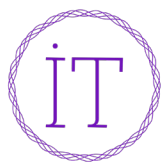


Jennifer Faringer is director of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence - Rochester Area. She can be reached at jfaringer@depaul.org.

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National Council on Alcoholism and
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**Just the facts,
know the risks...**

**Legal does not equal safe.
Marijuana is an addictive drug.**

Marijuana is only legal in
NYS for those 21 and older.

- Did you know that THC (a psychoactive ingredient in marijuana) is infused in a wide variety of enticing edible treats?
- Edibles infused with THC are not only tempting to children but are often indistinguishable from actual food products!
- With increased access to a wide variety of edibles, there has been a corresponding rise in pediatric poisonings. Effects may include drowsiness/lethargy, loss of muscle coordination, agitation/irritability and confusion. More critical effects (especially for children under 3) may include coma, respiratory depression, single/multiple seizures.
- The effects of edibles take much longer to be felt, often 30-60 minutes. This delayed response may often lead to ingesting more in order to feel the expected effect.
- Parents, look for items that mimic actual food products, check labeling for the presence of THC. In case of accidental ingestion of THC edibles, call the NYS Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.



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