Marijuana and Human Physiology

Synopsis

Even though marijuana is the second most widely used and abused drug after alcohol, many people believe it offers harmless recreation. This program dispels that belief with hard facts about marijuana, particularly the drug's chief psychoactive ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and its effects on the body.

A physician clearly describes the chemical's damaging effects on the sinuses, pharynx, uvula, lungs, heart, brain, cell division, reproductive system, and immune system.

The physician’s talk and demonstrations are intertwined with testimonials from one-time marijuana users. They cite physiological and psychological problems including aggravation of existing illness, chronic cough, impairment of memory and judgment, dropping out of school, loss of productivity, and drug-related arrests.

The psychological development of the "pot personality," the hazards of driving while under the influence, and the dangers of mixing marijuana with alcohol are also discussed.

The physiological and psychological damage done by marijuana is irrefutable. After seeing this program, not even the most skeptical can deny there are high risks involved in using the drug.

Questions to ask before viewing

1. How widespread do you think is the use of marijuana?
2. Tell what you know about the adverse effects of marijuana smoking.
3. What do you believe are some reasons people start smoking marijuana?

Questions to ask after viewing

1. What is marijuana? (Hemp plant-cannabis; a drug made from the plant's dried leaves and flowers, smoked to produce a narcotic-like effect; hashish.)
2. What is THC? (Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol; one of more than 60 substances unique to the cannabis plant; most prominent because of its mind-altering nature.)
3. Why does THC collect in the body? (Toxic cannabinoids are fat-soluble.)
4. Recall the magnitude of use of marijuana in our society. (Second most widely-abused drug after alcohol; more than a quarter of the U.S. population has used it; most often-used drug in the workplace at an annual cost of almost three billion dollars in lost productivity; major problem in schools and the armed forces.)
5. Compare smoking marijuana to tobacco. (Both damage lungs however marijuana contains more cancer-causing compounds than tobacco; may be contaminated with impure plant material and pesticides or fungus.)
6. How does marijuana affect the lungs? (Can cause extensive inflammation, chronic bronchitis and pulmonary emphysema; contributes to premalignant and malignant lesions; weakens capacity of macrophages to right against bacteria or other foreign matter.)
7. How does marijuana affect the heart? (Speeds heartbeat and elevates blood pressure; increases the normal oxygen need of the heart muscle-which becomes inefficient, unable to pump the required amount of blood to the cells.)
8. What does marijuana do to the brain? (Damages brain cells, impairs memory, slows down messages transmitted by brain cells, speeds up the aging process of the brain.)
9. What does marijuana do to the female reproductive system? (Causes infertility problems; can cause menstrual abnormalities.)
10. How can marijuana be transmitted to an unborn fetus and infant? (THC can be passed to a fetus through the mother's blood, and to an infant through breast milk.)
11. What does marijuana do to the male reproductive system? (Causes impotency.)
12. How does marijuana affect the immune system? ( Suppresses and impairs the immune system; debilitates and deforms white blood cells; weakens body's defense mechanism, including its resistance to genital herpes.)
13. What are the effects of marijuana on driving? (Impaired judgment; lack of awareness.)
14. Recall the testimonials. What do you think is meant by the term "pot personality?" (Psychological problems such as lack of self-esteem, a weakened hold on reality, hostility toward authority figures, suspiciousness, and a decrease in personal hygiene.)
15. How do you believe marijuana smoking leads to use of other drugs? (Subjective)
16. Has this program altered any of your beliefs about the use of marijuana? How? (Subjective)
Related titles in the AIMS collection

- 8210 Marijuana and the Mind
- 8288 Drug Abuse: Symptoms of Dependency
- 9667 Marijuana: Driving, and You
- 8152 Drugs: How They Affect Body Chemistry

Length

- 22 minutes

Subject Area

- Drug Education, Health and Guidance

Audience Levels

- Senior High-College, Adult
- Student and Employee Assistance Programs
- Military, Drug Rehabilitation

Catalog Number

- 9832

Annotation

Even though marijuana is the second most widely abused drug after alcohol, many people believe it offers harmless recreation. This film dispels that belief with hard facts about the drug and its effects on the body. A Physician-narrator clearly describes the drug's damaging effects on body systems and organs.

Marijuana and Human Physiology

Objectives

- To teach that marijuana is a toxic, mind-altering drug
- To demonstrate the serious medical problems that are caused by marijuana
- To reveal that marijuana is a major cause of accidents at work and on the highway
- To describe the harmful psychological effects of marijuana through the testimonials of recovering drug addicts
- To provide viewers with the facts that will influence them to reject the use of marijuana
- To supply information needed in drug abuse rehabilitation and prevention programs

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