

**DO YOU BELIEVE MARIJUANA IS A HARMLESS DRUG?****CHECK OUT THESE COMMONLY HELD MYTHS:**

**Myth 1: Marijuana is harmless.** The truth is, using marijuana can lead to many negative effects on your health, your social life, and your future. In addition, it can be addictive.

**Myth 2: It's not as harmful as alcohol or tobacco.** More people use alcohol and tobacco, and they use them more often and for longer periods of time. Also, alcohol and tobacco are much better researched than marijuana. So we can't directly compare the impact of the different drugs. However, most studies on marijuana agree: it does have harmful effects. Many of the same carcinogens found in tobacco are found in marijuana, and marijuana impairs people just as much as alcohol when it comes to driving, making decisions, etc.

**Myth 3: Marijuana is a natural product, so it must be good.** A few things don't make sense about this statement. First, many plants are poisonous. Heroin is a natural product, as is cocaine—and people don't go around saying heroin is natural, so it must be good! Also, some products found in health food stores are proving to have negative side effects, especially when used incorrectly or when mixed with other products or medicines. A natural product doesn't equal a safe product.

**Myth 4: Everyone uses marijuana.** Actually, less than half the students in a typical high school have used it at all in the last year. Far fewer use it regularly, and most don't use it at all.

**Myth 5: Marijuana isn't addictive.** For a small percentage of users, marijuana can be addictive. It's impossible for anyone to predict whether marijuana will be addictive for them, so anybody choosing to use marijuana is taking that chance.

**Myth 6: People who used marijuana in the '60s didn't become addicted, so marijuana can't be addictive.** This argument doesn't quite make sense. The marijuana of 30 or 40 years ago had a lower THC content than the marijuana of today, so the drug may have been less potentially addictive then. It's hard to know anything for sure about the marijuana of the past, because most studies on the effects of the drug are much more recent. However, the research shows that, without a doubt, today's marijuana can be addictive.

**Myth 7: Marijuana is a medicine, so it must be OK.** This might sound logical, but it doesn't make sense in a couple of ways. First of all, it's important to separate the medical uses of any drug from its other uses. *Any* medicine, used for something other than what it's intended for, can cause harm.

But we can't even call marijuana medicine at this point. The research about medicinal marijuana is incomplete. Some people with chronic and severe conditions, such as cancer and HIV/AIDS, or going through medical treatment like chemotherapy, have reported that using marijuana has been helpful for reducing pain and nausea, and for giving them an appetite for food when their treatment or illness has reduced their desire to eat. However, unlike prescribed medication and over-the-counter drugs, marijuana has not gone through the usual rigorous testing. Also, many new drugs are being developed for these medical problems.

The Canadian Medical Association is opposed to the medicinal use of marijuana without testing because it isn't known how much marijuana is most beneficial, how marijuana use interacts with other drugs, or how it affects other medical conditions a person may have.