

# Important Facts About Drugs

## Drug Addiction Often Begins With Adolescent Drug Use

There is evidence across a range of substances—including marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, opioids and synthetic narcotics that the risk of addiction is significantly greater when the use of these substances begins during adolescence than for those who initiate use during adulthood. National research on drug use shows that the number of addicted adults who first began using marijuana at the ages of 12 to 16 were six times higher than addicted adults who first used marijuana at the age of 18 or older.

### Iowa Department of Public Health Statistics for Webster County ages 12-25)

	12-17	18-25
Used Marijuana	13%	24%
Inappropriately used prescription drugs	5%	8%
Inappropriately used amphetamines (stimulants, uppers, speed)	2%	7%
Used Methamphetamine	0.4%	14%
Used alcohol – 5 or more drinks during a 2 hour period	16%	54%
Used tobacco – cigarettes or vaping	16%	18%

Note: In 2020, 99,000 (27%) Iowans ages 18- to 25 used illicit drugs (alcohol excluded)

## Today's Drugs Have Significantly Higher Potency and Are Much More Addictive

Drug	Potency and the Rise in Drug Use
Morphine	1X potency
Heroin	2X potency
Fentanyl	100X potency
Carfentanyl	10,000X potency
Note: Opioid Deaths	Iowa deaths 2005: 59 in 2020: 419 – a 700% increase
Methamphetamine	2005 – 35% purity 2018 – 97% purity
Marijuana smoked	1972 – 1% potency 2017 – 19.6% potency
Marijuana concentrated	2020 potency is 69%
Alcohol	Deaths in 2011 - 440 Deaths in 2018 - 616
Nicotine	Vaping increase use – 23% of 11 <sup>th</sup> graders and - 8% of 8 <sup>th</sup> graders vape

## **Is Marijuana a Gateway Drug?**

The debate about marijuana being a gateway drug continues to rage on. Data shows that the majority of people who use or have used marijuana do not move on to using other drugs. Yet, national drug use research also shows that most people who develop severe problems with drugs, such as cocaine, meth, heroin, and opioids had early experiences with marijuana before trying other drugs. A majority of drug addicts claim that after using marijuana for a period of time, their bodies craved for a more intense high which led them to using other illicit and more addictive drugs.

## **Marijuana Transportation into Iowa**

Data on the illegal transportation of marijuana to Iowa shows that the largest percentage of marijuana comes from Mexico followed by the state of Colorado. State law enforcement leaders anticipate that more marijuana will be coming into Iowa from Illinois, because it is a close neighboring state.

## **Impact of Legalizing Marijuana**

Data from states that have legalized recreational marijuana use shows that marijuana use harms more than just the person using the drug. Societal costs of marijuana use include paying for increased emergency room visits, medical care, and more addiction treatment for both the insured and uninsured; more drug impaired driving and more victims of drugged driving accidents; increased crime; increased population of homeless people; and increased exposure of marijuana to adolescents and even children as young as six-years old.

Studies by the Centennial Institute in Colorado on the social costs due to the legalization of marijuana in Colorado showed the following findings:

- \* For every dollar gained in tax revenue, Coloradans spent approximately \$4.50 to mitigate the effects of legalization.
- \* The number of homeless people has increased dramatically with some Colorado cities showing the homeless population more than doubling in size.
- \* A disturbing increase in the number of high school dropouts has occurred
- \* While people who attended college and used marijuana has grown since legalization, marijuana use remains more prevalent in the population with less education
- \* Adult marijuana users generally have lower educational attainment than non-users and for many long-term marijuana users, it has led to reduced cognitive abilities.
- \* Research shows a strong connection between increased marijuana use and the increased use of alcohol and illegal drugs.
- \* Calls to hospital emergency rooms related to marijuana increased dramatically since legalization of both medical marijuana and legalization of recreational marijuana
- \* The number of severely burned victims as a result of marijuana use dramatically increased.
- \* Since the legalization of marijuana, serious mental health challenges and suicide attempts, especially among adolescents and young adults, has dramatically increased

- \* People who use marijuana more frequently tend to be less physically active, and develop a sedentary lifestyle which has increased obesity rates among adults
- \* Marijuana has had a major impact on the safety of employees, and legalization has created new challenges for employers as work place accidents have increased significantly. Data shows that one third of employees report having observed marijuana use during work hours.
- \* States with legal recreational marijuana are reporting an increase in serious and fatal motor vehicle accidents involving drivers impaired by THC. Since marijuana was legalized in Colorado in 2013, traffic deaths where drivers tested positive for THC increased 138%.
- \* 69% of marijuana users say they have driven under the influence of marijuana at least once, and 27% admit to driving under the influence on a daily basis
- \* The estimated costs of DUIs for people who tested positive for marijuana only in 2016 approached \$25 million

### **Impact of Marijuana on Children**

Marijuana can also be taken orally and is often cooked into food. Commonly called edibles, this kind of marijuana is in the form of brownies or cookies. However, marijuana can be added to many types of food, just like an herb, and even appears in candy like gummies. States that have legalized marijuana have reported significant increases in marijuana ingestion by children as young as three years old. These incidents are usually accidental and end up in emergency room visits. Iowa law enforcement is seeing marijuana gummies coming into Iowa putting Iowa children at risk.

### **Impact of Marijuana on Adolescents**

There is a popular perception that marijuana isn't dangerous—but it is dangerous, both in the short term and the long term especially for adolescents (youth ages of 12-17). Unfortunately, the legalize cannabis industry puts out a lot of propaganda to youth that marijuana is not dangerous. Here is why marijuana is dangerous according to research by the American Academy of Pediatrics:



- \* Marijuana interferes with judgment, concentration, reaction time and coordination in ways that can make youth more likely to get into car crashes or other serious injuries.
- \* The ways that it interferes with brain functions such as memory, attention and problem-solving can impede learning and make it much harder for youth succeed in school.
- \* Marijuana can be addictive. Substance abuse treatment centers report that close to 50% of their adolescent clients are being treating for addiction to marijuana.
- \* Inhaling the marijuana smoke can cause lung problems.

- \* 50% of adolescents who are using e-cigarettes are vaping marijuana
- \* New research shows that marijuana use during adolescence, when the brain is going through many important changes, can lead to permanent problems with memory, learning and thinking.
- \* Youth who use marijuana regularly are less likely to finish high school and are more likely to use other more dangerous drugs.
- \* Youth who use marijuana regularly are more likely to develop mental health issues and many attempt suicide.

### **Vaping and Marijuana Use**

The practice of using vaping devices to consume marijuana is becoming increasingly widespread. Recent data shows that more than one-fifth of high school seniors have reported vaping marijuana in the past year. Cannabis vaping cartridges are easy to purchase on the Internet making access to marijuana for vaping easy and prevalent.



### **Methamphetamine Use**

The state of Iowa is struggling in its battle against illegal drug use and addiction, and the biggest challenge in this battle today is methamphetamine. The Iowa Department of Public Health reports that Iowa has experienced a 38% increase in methamphetamine treatment admissions over the past four years, and since 2011, methamphetamine-related deaths in Iowa have increased eight-fold.

Unfortunately, among Iowa youth, the perception of risk of methamphetamine use has been declining for the past several years.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant and for some first-time users, they become immediately addicted after one experience. People addicted to methamphetamine often develop higher tolerance to its pleasurable effects so they often need to take higher doses of the drug, take it more frequently, or change how they take it in an effort to get the desired effect. Chronic meth abusers may develop difficulty feeling any pleasure other than that provided by the drug, fueling further abuse.

In addition to being addicted to methamphetamine, long term meth users often exhibit symptoms such as significant anxiety, confusion, insomnia, mood disturbances, and violent behavior. They also may display a number of psychotic features, including paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and delusions (for example, the sensation of insects creeping under the skin). Psychotic symptoms can sometimes last for months or years after a person has quit using methamphetamine. Withdrawal from methamphetamine occurs when a chronic abuser stops taking the drug; symptoms of withdrawal include depression, anxiety, fatigue, and an intense craving for the drug.

Addicted meth users usually suffer physical effects as well, including weight loss, severe tooth decay and tooth loss, and skin sores. Skin sores are the result of picking and scratching the skin to get rid of insects imagined to be crawling under their skin.

### **Webster County**

Unfortunately, Webster County ranks in the top 20% for the per capita rate of methamphetamine use in Iowa. According to Sheriff Fleener, the use of methamphetamines has increased significantly in Fort Dodge and Webster County, mainly because it is 400 to 500 percent cheaper to buy today than just five years ago. Most of the methamphetamine in Iowa and Webster County is from Mexico and is transported to Iowa via the Interstate 35 corridor.

### **Methamphetamine Treatment by Age for Webster County**

Age 12-17	0.4%
Age 18-25	13.6%
Age 26-30	18%
Age 31-40	40%
Age 41-50	17%
Age 51-65	11%

