

# Marijuana Use

- Vermont ranks #1 in current marijuana use by 18–25 year olds.
- Vermont treatment admissions are up 350% since 1992.
- Use before age 17 shown to increase other drug use.
- Increases in “perceived risk” of use decreases use by teens.



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## Marijuana Use

Recent scientific research strongly suggests that using marijuana may have adverse effects on thinking, judgement, and physical and mental health.

### Short-term effects

Acute effects may include: anxiety and panic; impaired attention, memory, and ability to do things that require concentration while intoxicated; driving impairment especially if used with alcohol; and increased risk of mental illness symptoms in some people.

### Long-term effects

Probable chronic effects include; chronic bronchitis, lung impairment, increased risks of cancers of the aerodigestive tract, marijuana dependence, attention and memory impairments that may or may not be reversible even after prolonged abstinence.

### Cancer

A 2007 study found significantly higher rates of particular carcinogens (cancer causing substances) in marijuana smoke than in tobacco smoke. Some of these carcinogens were found in marijuana at 20 times the levels found in tobacco. Another 2007 study found that smoking one marijuana joint had the same adverse effect on the lungs as five cigarettes. These researchers also demonstrated a dose-response relationship; that is, the more marijuana an individual smoked, the worse the impact on the lungs.

### Birth Defects

In a study of drug use during pregnancy, prenatal marijuana use was associated with an increase in 39 percent of the 54 birth defects studied. This included deficits in the central nervous system, cardiovascular system, and the gastrointestinal system.

### Mental Illness

Another 2007 study suggests that regular marijuana use has very serious long-term mental health effects.

### Gateway Drug

Marijuana is considered by some to be a gateway drug, that is, use of marijuana leads to subsequent use of other drugs. Whether there is such a thing as a gateway drug is very controversial. However, there is no doubt that there is an association between the early consumption of marijuana and later use of other drugs.

A study of twins found that individuals who used marijuana by age 17 were two to five times more likely than their twin, who did not use marijuana before age 17, to report other drug use, alcohol dependence, and drug abuse or dependence.

### Treatment

The consequences of marijuana use account for a significant portion of the drug treatment in Vermont. In state fiscal year 2007, over 1550 individuals were treated for marijuana abuse in Vermont, costing approximately \$2.1 million dollars. Of those treated, 72 percent were under the age of 25. National data indicate that admissions for treatment of marijuana-related disorders in Vermont in 2006 are nearly three and a half times higher than in 1992.

All available data suggest that marijuana use is a significant and growing problem in the state of Vermont. Marijuana consumption and its consequences among individuals under the age of 26 are of particular concern.

Past **Year** Marijuana Use

Age Group	VT (%)	US (%)	VT Rank
All	14.4	10.5	3
12–17	17.2	13.9	6
18–25	40.6	27.9	2
26+	9.6	7.0	2

Past **Month** Marijuana Use

Age Group	VT (%)	US (%)	VT Rank
All	9.0	6.0	2
12–17	10.5	7.2	3
18–25	26.7	16.4	1
26+	5.8	4.1	3

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