**Lesson 6C: Marijuana**

**Overview:** Students will learn the consequences of marijuana/cannabis use by accessing and synthesizing information and resources. The lesson will reinforce the substance use prevention and medication safety principles to promote healthy behaviors. Students will apply this functional knowledge in future decision making and refusal skills lessons to prevent marijuana use.

National Health Education Standards:

**Standard 1:** Students comprehend functional health knowledge to enhance health.

**Standard 5:** Students demonstrate effective decision-making skills to enhance health.

Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO):

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| Students will avoid taking, touching, or tasting any marijuana substance and will tell a trusted adult. |

Lesson Objective – Students will be able to:

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| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. Identify the consequences of marijuana use. | Attachment 6c.2 – Marijuana Stop, Think, Choose Scenarios |
| 1. Analyze information to debunk the myths associated with marijuana use. | Attachment 6c.2 – Marijuana Stop, Think, Choose Scenarios |
| 1. Advocate for healthy decisions using valid health information. | Attachment 6c.2 – Marijuana Stop, Think, Choose Scenarios |

Lesson Assumptions:

* This lesson assumes your students have completed the Stop, Think, Choose lesson (Lesson 2) and have addressed influences (Lesson 4).

Introduction:

* As marijuana becomes legal in more states, teens’ perceptions of harm have gone down, meaning more kids don’t think marijuana is dangerous. Marijuana use during adolescence, a period when the brain is still developing, is associated with negative impacts on brain development; poor school performance; increases in drop-out rates; increased risk for psychotic disorders, and depression in adulthood ([SAMHSA, 2021](https://mail-attachment.googleusercontent.com/attachment/u/0/?ui=2&ik=ed26ab2f4d&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1771035686764775692&th=1893fb92e227890c&view=att&disp=inline&saddbat=ANGjdJ_zOuEJdLK1S8wsU0_AKB9bgnWGHczvFciUcLdXjYyxK4XVOKFY0Sdi0QYO7OpphuHqLa3ODUpFY1fpoAP8VHOWwLQO3XqR1pbkUzjYODez_cq9Zh8NP4KL3IdwplRi2iOdrgEw_39OJE9I1FxjRVcWImx1nVcI1uYg6uFuRWBiL3uw7cBdIz3RUAbveX6ew5VIgu2TwEf5yMj4eANZiJVwjBy3-fHXDnmWDHk7BYwMO6zAOpNDq4Rwu26YuZXf67-xAlSytCr0Jq8AOmebDFxwqT3julGHWlaUX9G20P6V_NPaQvn3BM1ciY_85dSdmdQV7SNcrr6nkrpnuyTRxf3hCBTuNOA47sbqvvnOsTNTuwspNXBJzH5C778iGx9HHTztPKCro9UbGcAQDccvq8LjNC3rWR-ZmGTTxgvtyDmCmY3uM_4GRvNuGC99hx1da2-zo4LcqSZD68xziUckXrjHi2J46hiDjdVHXT4ftDceS2ndM7G7JgS1xhbedFZiYcut3D9Dp-4-9EoWcEr0jDb4t9T97GBEsc9ugIJOGtUwLHHK9ETncnbTfYMlNrO_aK7BNBgg7gIvBk_iL5YBHp5BuzxMA2-OLM1gQo7X1NMhXB3GnM_JVVf8ll6moHxJRD4qjiwFuwQzgzrKK8Toti_XVTEz7QNXy9NSrPZoW2FGfB0NjAvW6ZxMz8lZWqeZHZoD2jaT1ujiAWliXXKRfSd7tJe46mWBcqbs7FM5177_w4HRT7TxwmMiOdYguwKm7N2XJ0UpLYbzXYsikCchbSlGpu9kPjo7Hi7C1SH6jSg-0k80YkGZ0Z_u8MFuWOc8LjveL4AMsECRMdbW87uVCOZhpTtCCATX4_pvyPK_7xjv20lhHDMACFZTYNaEAoyqu1OcyBRC1Z3k6jFOn_OjyAN71IEUoUsdL0eH1H3xo1zW0wHQJCV3VSv60mxjtH4uut-WccHIjvPx_m4TBS-M9pp2H2n4lJ_lc9wLo9axeduNx7RCEZ2cpsr7Ti4)). This lesson will discuss the dangers associated with the drug, define the scope of the problem, and debunk the myths associated with marijuana.

Teaching Steps:

Activity 1 –What do you know about marijuana?

* What do you know about marijuana?
  + Possible student responses: It impacts memory; recreational use is becoming legal in more areas; it stinks; it is addictive; people use it to relax; etc.
  + It is important to note that there are also synthetic cannabinoids with names like Spice and K-2. These products activate the same cannabinoid receptors in the human brain as THC, the chemical in marijuana that causes psychological effects. However, they are 10 to 200 times more potent than THC, and therefore have the potential to cause serious adverse events, including psychosis and fatal overdose ([SAMHSA, 2021](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep21-06-01-001.pdf)).
* Students may have the perception that “everyone is using marijuana.” It is important to build positive norms in the classroom and share the following data with students:
  + According to the [2021 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)](https://nccd.cdc.gov/Youthonline/App/Results.aspx?TT=A&OUT=0&SID=HS&QID=QQ&LID=XX&YID=2021&LID2=&YID2=&COL=S&ROW1=N&ROW2=N&HT=QQ&LCT=LL&FS=S1&FR=R1&FG=G1&FA=A1&FI=I1&FP=P1&FSL=S1&FRL=R1&FGL=G1&FAL=A1&FIL=I1&FPL=P1&PV=&TST=False&C1=&C2=&QP=G&DP=1&VA=CI&CS=Y&SYID=&EYID=&SC=DEFAULT&SO=ASC):
  + 27.8% of high school students have ever used marijuana in their lifetime; that means 72.2% of students have never tried marijuana.
  + 15.8% of students currently used marijuana (one or more times during the past 30 days before the survey); that means 84.2% of students were not currently using marijuana.
* Teacher feedback: Just as we discussed in one of the prior lessons, substances that are legal for people 21 and older aren’t necessarily safe. Marijuana can negatively impact a person’s health, relationships, future, and communities. Here are some fast facts about marijuana:
  + Marijuana use among youth and adolescents is a major public health concern. In 2019, about 1 in 8 adolescents aged 12 to 17 (13 percent) used marijuana in the past year (about 3.3 million people) [SAMHSA, 2021](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep21-06-01-001.pdf)).
  + Marijuana use during adolescence, a period when the brain is still developing, is associated with negative impacts on brain development; poor school performance; increases in dropout rates; increased risk for psychotic disorders and depression in adulthood; and suicidal ideation or behavior ([SAMHSA, 2021](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep21-06-01-001.pdf)).
  + Marijuana use can impair important skills required for safe driving by slowing reaction time and the ability to make decisions, impairing coordination, and distorting perception ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/driving.html)).
  + Cannabis is the most commonly used federally illegal drug in the United States; 52.5 million people, or about 19% of Americans, used it at least once in 2021 ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/data-research/facts-stats/)).
  + Recent research estimated that approximately 3 in 10 people who use marijuana have marijuana use disorder. For people who begin using marijuana before age 18, the risk of developing marijuana use disorder is even greater ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/data-research/facts-stats/)).
* Marijuana use directly affects the brain, specifically the parts of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision making, coordination, emotion, and reaction time. Infants, children, and teens (who still have developing brains) are especially susceptible to the adverse effects of marijuana ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/data-research/facts-stats/)).
  + Long-term or frequent marijuana use has been linked to increased risk of psychosis or schizophrenia in some users ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/data-research/facts-stats/)).
  + Using marijuana during pregnancy may increase the person’s risk for pregnancy complications. Pregnant and breastfeeding persons should avoid marijuana ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/data-research/facts-stats/)).
  + Overconsumption of marijuana can happen especially when using marijuana-infused products like edibles and beverages since it can take up to two hours to feel the effects from the drug ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/faq/)).
  + THC can be passed to infants and children through secondhand smoke, and people exposed to secondhand marijuana smoke can experience psychoactive effects, such as feeling high ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/faq/)).
  + Coinciding with the increasing rates of cannabis use has been the recognition of a new clinical condition known as cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome. This causes persistent nausea and vomiting ([American Journal of Therapeutics](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28953512/)); there have been reports of fatal cases ([Journal of Forensic Science](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29768651/)).

Activity 2 – Know to NO! – Myth Information Sheet

* Distribute Myths and Facts of Marijuana (Attachment 6c.1) and have the students review the information. Immerse the students into the content by having them use a highlighter to identify the key points for each myth.
* Distribute the Marijuana Stop, Think, Choose scenarios (6c.2). Students can work individually or with a partner to identify the myth that is being referred to in the scenario and what factual information they would give to the character.
  + Review each scenario and have students share their answers with the class.

Closure:

* This lesson identifies the dangers associated with marijuana and provides information to debunk the myths about marijuana. Students will apply what they learned in later lessons when practicing decision making and refusal skills to:
  + Avoid taking, touching, or tasting any marijuana substance.
  + Tell a trusted adult.
* Exit Ticket – Students will each receive a sticky note to write one reason they will make healthy choices to prevent marijuana use and post it in the classroom for others to see.

Lesson Resources:

* [Report "Preventing Marijuana Use among Youth"](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep21-06-01-001.pdf) (SAMHSA)
* [Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29768651)
* [Understanding Your Risk for Cannabis Use Disorder](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/cannabis-use-disorder.html).
* [Marijuana: Teen Myths and Facts](https://elunanetwork.org/resources/marijuana-teen-myths-and-facts)
* [Cannabis and Driving](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/driving.html)
* [Cannabis Facts and Stats](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/data-research/facts-stats/)
* [Bipartisan Bill Would Legalize Marijuana in Ohio](https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2023/05/30/bipartisan-bill-would-legalize-marijuana-in-ohio/)
* [DOJ/DEA Marijuana/Cannabis Drug Fact Sheet (PDF)](https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Marijuana-Cannabis-2020_0.pdf)

Attachment 6c.1: Myths and Facts of Marijuana

**MYTH 1** – *Marijuana helps people concentrate and focus so they can do better at school or work.*

**FACT:** Youth marijuana use is associated with neuropsychological problems such as the inability to concentrate, difficulty with organization, lack of reasoning ability, problems with coordination, personality changes, difficulties with language, problems processing sensory input, poor school performance, and increased school dropout rates. There is increasing evidence that heavy and/or regular (e.g., daily or near daily) marijuana use among young people may be associated with cognitive deficits such as impaired learning. Other concerning risks include physical changes in the brain areas responsible for attention and memory and increased risk for and early onset of psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia and marijuana use disorder ([SAMHSA, 2021](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep21-06-01-001.pdf)).

**MYTH 2:** *Marijuana is prescribed as a medicine, so it must be safe.*

**FACT:** Some people use marijuana for medical reasons. Research on the medical effects of marijuana is still limited, but people with cancer, HIV/AIDS, or other chronic illnesses may find that marijuana increases appetite, helps manage pain and nausea, and lowers anxious feelings. Some states and cities have passed laws that allow people with certain medical issues to get prescriptions for medical marijuana from a health care provider.

Federal laws still don’t allow the use of marijuana, even for medical reasons, so conflicts can arise between state and federal law. In any case, medical marijuana is controlled as a prescription drug. It is not safe to use marijuana without being under a doctor’s care.

**MYTH 3:** *Marijuana isn’t as bad for your health as tobacco.*

**FACT:** Any kind of smoke is harmful to lung health. Smoke from marijuana combustion has been shown to contain many of the same toxins, irritants, and carcinogens (cancer-causing chemicals) as tobacco smoke. At least 50 of the carcinogens in tobacco smoke are also present in marijuana smoke. Smoking marijuana damages the human lung, and regular use leads to chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and other lung disorders ([Tobacco-Free Life, 2016](https://tobaccofreelife.org/resources/marijuana-vs-tobacco/)). Premalignant changes have been shown in the pulmonary epithelium, and there are reports of lung and tongue cancer and other cancers in people who use marijuana ([NIH, 2003](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1125867/)).

**MYTH 4:** Marijuana isn’t addictive.

**FACT**: Many people keep using marijuana even when its use causes problems with family, school, work, sports, and other activities. Some people who use marijuana will develop marijuana use disorder, meaning that they are unable to stop using marijuana even though it’s causing health and social problems in their lives. One study estimated that approximately 3 in 10 people who use marijuana have marijuana use disorder. Another study estimated that people who use cannabis have about a 10% likelihood of becoming addicted. The risk of developing marijuana use disorder is greater in people who start using marijuana during youth or adolescence and who use marijuana more frequently ([CDC, 2024](https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/cannabis-use-disorder.html)).

**MYTH 5**: Marijuana use affects only the person who uses it.

**FACT:** Marijuana doesn’t just affect the person who uses the drug. Marijuana use can harm a developing fetus in a pregnant person. Teens who use marijuana risk losing the trust of their parents/guardians or hurting their relationships with friends.

Communities are hurt when people who use marijuana cause motor vehicle crashes and injure themselves and others. People who drive under the influence of marijuana risk all the same legal consequences as someone who gets a DUI for alcohol. Society in general is harmed when marijuana use is linked to violence and crime, makes workers less productive, harms students’ success, and puts strain on the health care system due to more illness and injuries.

**MYTH 6:** Because marijuana’s natural, it can’t hurt your body.

**FACT**: Early youth marijuana use is associated with increased risk for psychotic disorders in adulthood; increased risk for later depression; suicidal ideation or behavior; and neurodevelopmental (development of the nervous system) decline.

Common short-term adverse effects: Increased heart rate; altered sense of time; increased anxiety/paranoia; slow reaction time; problems with balance and coordination; impaired driving; increased appetite; difficulty with thinking and problem solving; memory impairment. The likelihood of adverse effects increases with increasing doses of marijuana.

Common long-term effects: Lung and breathing problems (particularly when smoked and often among those who also smoke cigarettes); stroke; and increased risk for social anxiety ([SAMHSA, 2021](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep21-06-01-001.pdf)).

Attachment 6c.2: STOP, THINK, CHOOSE Scenarios

**Directions:** Use the Myths/Facts Sheet to share the truth about marijuana with the character in the scenario. Refer to the correct myth to convey your message.

**Scenario 1:** James is a junior track and field athlete at Central High School. James and a few of his teammates have been experimenting with marijuana. Other teammates have noticed that James has been running slower and having trouble controlling his breathing during races. When confronted by another teammate who has chosen not to participate in the use of marijuana, James says, “It’s cool because weed is all natural, so it really can’t hurt your body.”

* What myth does James believe?
* Referencing the textual information from Attachment 6c.1, what information can you share with James to convince him that marijuana use can hurt his body?

**Scenario 2**: Sarah is concerned about her younger sister Jasmine, a ninth grader. Jasmine has been acting really reserved and has been very secretive lately. She also has been hanging with a new group of friends who use marijuana. Sarah walks in on Jasmine smoking marijuana and is really upset because she and Jasmine have always been very close. Ever since Jasmine has been using marijuana, they have not been hanging out together. Jasmine is convinced that marijuana only affects her and not others around her.

* What myth does Jasmine believe?
* Referencing the textual information from Attachment 6c.1, what information can Sarah share with Jasmine to convince her that marijuana doesn’t just affect the person using it?

**Scenario 3:** Luke, who is normally an energetic person, has been sluggish at school and smells like marijuana. He tries to get his best friend Seth to smoke with him, but Seth refuses to smoke marijuana. Seth is worried that Luke is becoming addicted. It seems like he needs to always be high. Luke keeps telling Seth that it is impossible to become addicted to marijuana.

* What myth does Luke believe?
* Referencing the textual information from Attachment 6c.1, what information can Seth share with Luke to help convince him that marijuana is addictive?

**Scenario 4:** Ashley has begun to use marijuana. She says it helps her to cope with the recent death of her grandmother, who smoked cigarettes and died of lung cancer. Ashley has vowed never to use tobacco, but she does not believe that marijuana is as bad for her health as tobacco is; therefore, she does not plan to stop using marijuana.

* What myth does Ashley believe?
* Referencing the textual information from Attachment 6c.1, what information can you share with Ashley to convince her that marijuana is just as bad for her health as tobacco?

**Scenario 5:** Jake smokes marijuana. He believes that marijuana must be safe because it is prescribed as medicine. He also believes that it is OK to smoke marijuana because it is becoming legal in some states.

* What myth does Jake believe?
* Referencing the textual information from Attachment 6c.1, what information can you share with Jake to convince him that just because marijuana is prescribed and legal in some states doesn’t mean it is safe?

**Scenario 6:** Robert is a 10th grader and gets average grades. Recently, he was at a party with friends and was introduced to marijuana. Since the party, Robert has begun smoking marijuana regularly. On a test recently, Robert earned a B-plus, and he is now convinced that marijuana helps him concentrate and focus, resulting in better grades.

* What myth does Robert believe?
* Referencing the textual information from Attachment 6c.1, what information can you share with Robert to convince him that marijuana doesn’t make him concentrate better?