



# #9963 THINK TWICE: MARIJUANA & CANCER

HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA, 2002  
Grade Level: 8-13+  
19 mins.

## DESCRIPTION

"Smoking pot is cool. It doesn't really affect me." "You can't get cancer from grass." Counselors, users, surgeons, and a cancer patient share statistics, facts, and experiences as they address misconceptions about marijuana. Compares the lungs of marijuana users and nonusers. NOTE: Graphic pictures of head and neck cancers.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

### Subject Area: Health

- Standard: Understands aspects of substance use and abuse
  - ♦ Benchmark: Knows the short- and long-term consequences of the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (e.g., physical consequences such as shortness of breath, cirrhosis, lung cancer, emphysema; psychological consequences such as low self-esteem, paranoia, depression, apathy; social consequences such as crime, domestic violence, loss of friends) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1-4.)
  - ♦ Benchmark: Knows influences that promote alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (e.g., peer pressure, peer and adult modeling, advertising, overall availability, cost) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 4.)

## INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To identify some of the physical effects of smoking marijuana.
2. To explain the link between marijuana smoking and various forms of cancer.
3. To separate the facts about marijuana from commonly believed myths.
4. To encourage young people to "think twice" before smoking marijuana.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For years, marijuana has been regarded as a harmless drug—especially by young people. Conflicting scientific data and social attitudes have hidden many of the side effects from the public. However, over the last few years, recent advances in research technology have provided new evidence concerning marijuana’s health risks. In particular, the link between marijuana smoking and cancer has become quiet clear.

## VOCABULARY

- |                     |                        |                       |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. abnormal         | 9. laced               | 16. psychological     |
| 2. addictive        | 10. lack of motivation | addiction             |
| 3. alcohol          | 11. lungs              | 17. radiation therapy |
| 4. cancer/cancerous | 12. lymph nodes        | 18. sinus             |
| 5. carcinogens      | 13. medical marijuana  | 19. tissue            |
| 6. cigarettes       | 14. metastasis         | 20. tobacco           |
| 7. ingredients      | 15. peer pressure      | 21. tumor             |
| 8. joint            |                        |                       |

## BEFORE SHOWING

1. Discuss drugs and drug use. List familiar drugs. Focus on marijuana. Discuss why people use marijuana and whether or not marijuana is a “harmless” drug.
2. Discuss various types of cancer. Share personal experiences and stories related to cancer and cancer treatments.
3. Warn the viewers that the video has some very graphic footage of actual tumors and surgeries.

## DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Consider pausing to discuss and clarify points that are made throughout the video.

## AFTER SHOWING

### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Why do people smoke marijuana?
2. How does marijuana affect people?
3. Describe how marijuana can be considered addictive.
4. How much higher is the risk of getting cancer if you smoke marijuana?
5. What kind of cancer is the biggest cause of cancer deaths in men and women in the U.S.? Why is lung cancer so difficult to treat? What happens to most people who get lung cancer?
6. Why is marijuana tied to cancer?
7. How does the amount of carcinogens in marijuana cigarettes compare to the amount in tobacco cigarettes?

## C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

8. Why does the way people smoke marijuana increase the amount of carcinogens that get deposited in the lungs? How much more is deposited than with tobacco cigarettes?
9. How many cigarettes would equal one joint of marijuana?
10. What is the cancer risk if a person smokes both tobacco and marijuana cigarettes?
11. How does drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana affect a person's cancer risk?
12. Tell Mark Blanchett's story.
13. What are the issues around medicinal uses of marijuana?
14. Explain why "natural" does not equate with "good for you."
15. Describe the lung tissue of nonsmokers, marijuana smokers, and marijuana and tobacco smokers.
16. Discuss the impact of the information presented in the video.

### **Applications and Activities**

1. Discuss common myths about marijuana.
  - a. Smoking marijuana is safer than smoking tobacco because you only smoke a few joints compared to many cigarettes.
  - b. Marijuana can be used for medical purposes in ways that other drugs cannot.
  - c. Studies about the dangers of marijuana are unreliable and meant to scare people.
  - d. Compared to drugs like ecstasy and crystal meth, marijuana is a natural product.
  - e. Cancer of the lungs, head, and neck happen to people who are older.
  - f. If the risks of marijuana were that high, I would know about them.
2. Research a marijuana topic. Possible topics include:
  - a. Marijuana and cancer. What new discoveries have been made concerning the link between marijuana and cancer? Why has it taken so long for clear fact to surface?
  - b. The battle to legalize marijuana. Who is involved? What are the arguments for legalization? Why are those supporting legalization skeptical of medical research involving marijuana? What do medical experts think about the health effects of a legalized marijuana trade?
  - c. Medicinal marijuana. How has marijuana been used for medical purposes? What are the benefits? The risks? What do doctors think? What other drugs can be used instead of marijuana?
  - d. Marijuana vs. tobacco. Why is marijuana as dangerous as or more dangerous than tobacco? How do the chemicals in marijuana affect the body? How do marijuana and tobacco act together to produce increased health risks?
  - e. Marijuana addition. What have we learned about how marijuana affects the brain? How does THC work in the brain? Is marijuana physically addictive? Psychologically addictive?
  - f. Marijuana and alcohol. How does alcohol affect the risk factors of marijuana? What is the process of cell mutation that takes place in a marijuana smoker's mouth or throat? How is this related to changes caused by alcohol?
3. Debate topics related to marijuana. Possible topics include:
  - a. Marijuana should be legalized.

## C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

- b. Medical research concerning marijuana's side effects cannot be trusted.
- c. Even as a recreational drug, marijuana is dangerous.
4. Discuss how various factors have made it difficult for researchers to understand the long-term effects of marijuana. Possible factors include:
  - a. Only recent advances in technology have provided a glimpse of microscopic changes taking place in the lungs' of marijuana smokers.
  - b. It takes years for some marijuana-related cancers to develop enough to produce symptoms. Heavy wide-spread marijuana use didn't begin until the late 1960s.
  - c. Many people do not want to reveal that they have smoked marijuana because it is an illegal, illicit drug.
  - d. Many marijuana smokers also smoke tobacco and/or drink alcohol.
  - e. People who smoke marijuana are often reluctant to believe any information about the risks.
5. In small groups, research marijuana's affects on the systems of the body. Report the findings to the class.
6. Role-play scenarios related to marijuana use. Create original scenarios or choose from these:
  - a. Your best friend used to smoke pot just on the weekends, but now is coming to school stoned. You watch her space out during class and then she asks to copy your notes. This makes you angry.
  - b. You are going to a concert with a friend. You overhear your friend talking with others about getting stoned before the concert. You don't want to smoke pot.
7. Work in small groups to examine how the media portrays people who smoke marijuana.
  - a. Find a movie in which one or more characters smoke marijuana. The more scenes with marijuana, the better.
  - b. Watch the movie separately or as a group, paying particular attention to the scenes of marijuana use.
  - c. Analyze the ways that marijuana use is portrayed in the film. Consider:
    - i. What kinds of characters use the marijuana (hero, villain, etc.)?
    - ii. How much marijuana is consumed and what are the effects?
    - iii. What is the tone of the scenes involving marijuana? Are they funny? Ridiculous? Tragic?
    - iv. What kind of audience is the movie aimed at?
    - v. What is implied about marijuana? What information is left out?
  - d. Organize a presentation that allows the group to share the information with the other classmates.
8. Create a poster that shows the effects of marijuana on the mouth, throat, stomach, lungs, liver, heart, brain, and reproductive organs. Present the poster to a younger class.
9. Work in small groups to create positive persuasive statements in response to the following situations. Share the statements with the class. Decide on the best ones.
  - a. You want to persuade your older brother to stop smoking pot because it is harmful to his health.

## C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

- b. You want to persuade your best friend's little sister to turn down marijuana if someone offers it to her.
- c. You want to persuade your boyfriend/girlfriend to stop smoking pot with his/her new best friend.

### SUMMARY

This vivid program points out new research that links marijuana smoking with head and neck cancers in addition to the already known risk of developing lung cancer. The video tells the story of a young man, whose chronic marijuana smoking developed cancer of his tongue, neck, and jaw and who is now permanently disfigured.

It also reveals the recent research of Dr. Paul Donald who has been studying head and neck cancers in young people. Pictures are shown of many young marijuana smokers who subsequently developed similar cancers. Another physician displays chest x-rays of young marijuana smokers who have developed life-threatening lung cancer. After viewing this video, viewers will think twice before lighting up a joint.



### CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- [Marijuana Exposed #9959](#)
- [Stand Up for Yourself: Peer Pressure and Drugs #2231](#)
- [The Teen Files Flipped: The Reality of Drug Use #9924](#)
- [THC #8922](#)

### World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **CNN—STUDY FINDS SMOKING MARIJUANA AND COCAINE CAN CAUSE CANCER**

<http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9808/18/marijuana.cancer/>

Read this article that contains findings from a study that confirms a direct link between marijuana smoking and cancer. Extended coverage and links to related stories.



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- **SMOKING MARIJUANA—HEAD AND NECK CANCER RISK**

<http://www.personalmd.com/news/n1228105430.shtml>

This article asserts that marijuana use can cause cancer in the mouth, tongue, larynx or pharynx. Smoking marijuana increases head and neck cancer risk. The researchers compared marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco use in 173 patients who had cancer of the head and neck with that of 176 blood donors who did not have cancer.

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- **MARIJUANA—CANCER**

[http://www.wctu.org/marijuana\\_-\\_cancer.html](http://www.wctu.org/marijuana_-_cancer.html)

This study maintains that there are more cancer-causing agents in marijuana than in any other substance presently known to man. Click on the “Previous” and “Next” buttons at the bottom of the page to read more detailed information about this drug and its effects.

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- **MARIJUANA: FACTS FOR TEENS**

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/MarijBroch/Marijteens.html>

What is marijuana? Are there different kinds? What happens if you smoke marijuana? These and many more questions are answered in language that is simple yet clear for the average middle school student to understand. There is a version for parents, as well as a Spanish-language version to the right of the Web page.

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- **IN THE KNOW—MARIJUANA**

<http://www.intheknowzone.com/marijuana/test.htm>

Test your knowledge of marijuana by taking a 15-item test about this controversial drug. Then click to see the results and more information.