

# Is Marijuana Really Harmless?

## A SHORT GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Many people in the government and the national media seem to be saying that marijuana—if used in moderation—is pretty much harmless. But is it? As more and more young people use it, the question becomes urgent.

One of the scientists who have studied the drug the longest—Dr. Hardin Jones, professor of medical physics and physiology at the University of California, Berkeley, and assistant director of the Donner Laboratory, says no. Writing in **PRIVATE PRACTICE** Magazine, a medical journal, he highlights fourteen brain changes exhibited by the average marijuana smoker. These are especially helpful for parents.

Says Dr. Jones:

- 1 He has shifted from a self-activating, interesting, and interested person to one who is withdrawn and given to disordered thinking.
- 2 Thought formation in the marijuana user tends to be less powerful: conclusions are relatively impetuous, and expressed ideas are often *non sequiturs*.

- 3 The marijuana user's attention span and ability to concentrate have been reduced.
- 4 Memory, especially short-term memory, is shortened.
- 5 The facial circulation reflexes are impaired; blushing is reduced. The skin tends to be pallid and relatively lacking in blood (except during the marijuana 'high').
- 6 The conditioned social responses, such as affection for parents and tolerance for their suggestions, are impaired. There is a loss of other conditioned responses; for example, an unkempt appearance is common and a loss of inhibition about urination in inappropriate places. Concern for consequences is reduced, and concern for the rights and well-being of others may be largely absent.
- 7 The marijuana user does not want to be 'hassled.' Mild criticism or merely requesting that housekeeping chores be done may be interpreted as hassling.
- 8 Marijuana is a hypnotic drug, and the hypnotic spell is long lasting. Thus, the user is likely to be talked into many situations that he would otherwise avoid.

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- 9 The young marijuana user tends to remain thin and to be underdeveloped for his age. The trend is more pronounced with heavy use. The daily marijuana user of several years' duration is likely to appear emaciated.
- 10 The male is deficient in male hormone. He is likely to have a tendency toward paranoia or schizophrenia, or both.
- 11 He is likely to have an elevated number of broken chromosomes in cultures of his white blood cells.
- 12 His white blood cell immune response is lowered.
- 13 The daily cycle of sleep and waking is largely inverted. The marijuana user stays up at night.
- 14 Sexual functions are often stimulated early in marijuana use, but with regular use, the sexuality is suppressed."

In short, pot is anything but harmless. Parents whose children are smoking this dangerous weed should discuss this with their family doctor. It is a serious health problem. ■