

ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

ABOUT MARIJUANA

May 21, 2015

Many Colorado residents and visitors have questions about retail marijuana. Use this information to answer some common questions and to help start conversations.

YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Natural products can be dangerous or poisonous.

Marijuana, like other plants such as tobacco or poisonous berries, can harm people. The chemical in marijuana that makes you feel “high,” tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) can have negative effects on the brain, including memory problems that last up to a week and the risk of symptoms, like hallucinations or paranoia immediately after use.

Legal does not mean safe.

Think about alcohol or cigarettes. Both are legal to use, but have risks. Marijuana also has risks even though it is now legal for adults 21 years and older. Being legal does not make marijuana safe.

Many medicines, including medicinal marijuana, may have harmful side effects.

Doctors can recommend medical marijuana in special cases when they decide the benefit is greater than the risk for side effects. Talk to your doctor about treatment choices that have the lowest risks.

Smoke is smoke.

Breathing any smoke is bad for your health, whether the smoke comes from campfires, tobacco or marijuana. Marijuana smoke has the same chemicals as tobacco smoke. Some of these chemicals can cause cancer.

Driving while high doubles your risk of a crash.

It is illegal to drive under the influence of marijuana. Marijuana makes driving more dangerous because it slows your reaction time and makes it harder to tell distances or time. Wait at least 6 hours after smoking or at least 8 hours after eating or drinking marijuana before driving, biking, or performing other safety-sensitive activities.

Vaped, eaten or smoked – THC is still THC.

Though smoking marijuana has the added risk of harmful smoke exposure, using marijuana edibles or a vaporizer still exposes you to THC. For more on the health risks of THC, visit Colorado.gov/Marijuana.

The natural cannabinoid balance in your body can be upset by THC.

While some cannabinoids occur naturally in the body and in breast milk to help nerve cells work, the cannabinoid from marijuana, THC, is much stronger. THC can upset the natural balance in your body and make it difficult for your nerve cells to work normally. This is worse for youth and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

YOUR HOME AND FAMILY

Safely store marijuana away from youth.

Young children may confuse marijuana products for regular food or candy. Be sure all marijuana products are kept in child-resistant packaging, clearly labeled and locked up. Youth may get into items you think are safely stored.

Talk early and often with youth about marijuana.

Safe storage is not always enough. Have open conversations with youth about the risks to their developing brain. Set clear household rules together.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should not use marijuana.

There are some medicines and foods, like lunchmeat or sushi, that pregnant or breastfeeding women should not have to prevent harming their baby. This is also true for marijuana.

Marijuana is not a safe treatment for nausea during pregnancy.

THC in marijuana passes to the baby through the placenta. This may make it harder for the child to pay attention and learn, especially as they grow. Pregnant women should talk to their doctor about safer choices to treat nausea that do not risk harming the baby.

A smoke-free environment is safest for your family.

Breathing any smoke is bad for your health. Do not allow smoking in your home or around your family.



Marijuana can make children very sick. Look for problems walking or sitting up, starting to be sleepy or having a hard time breathing.

If you are worried, call the poison control hotline as soon as possible. Calling is free and you will be helped quickly: 1-800-222-1222.

If symptoms seem bad, call 911 or go to an emergency room right away.



All references are from the systematic literature review and data analysis from the Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee's Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado: 2014 report.

Access the report at:
bit.ly/CDPHE_RMPHAC



For information about the retail marijuana laws in Colorado, go to:
Colorado.gov/Marijuana.



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