
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591 December, 2019

Parental Influence



There is an old saying that keeps popping into my mind as I write this newsletter...it is, "It's not what I say, but what I do." But parents aren't perfect.

Westchester children are on school vacation and they have more interactions with parents and relatives and observe more parental behaviors. Therefore if teens see unhealthy behaviors, it is so important for parents to tell their children, "I want you to grow up to be healthier than me." Similarly, if parents see unhealthy teen behaviors it is important to express concern and get help.

There is new research that shows that if a parent is using marijuana, then there is an increased risk that their children are at an increased risk for the use of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and opioid use.

Parents who model behavior in all aspects of their life provide a very strong protective factor for their children. A strong, supportive parental environment nurtures the child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development.

In addition, parents need to be knowledgeable about the dangers associated with teen marijuana use and driving. Most are aware that drinking and driving is dangerous but driving under the influence of marijuana is also very dangerous.

Vacation is a great time to update your teen on the latest information. Visit, powertotheparent.org for tips. Talk2prevent.ny.gov. and drugfree.org also provide helpful information for parents.

Editor: Patricia Murphy Warble, LCSW, CPP

Link Between Parental Marijuana Use And Youth Substance Use



A new study published by Bertha K. Madras, PhD, et al in the Journal of the American Medical Association finds a link between parental marijuana use and youth substance use. The study found that parental marijuana use was associated with increased risk of marijuana and tobacco use and opioid misuse by both adolescent and young adult offspring, and of alcohol use by adolescent offspring.

Below are the findings from the abstract of this study which can be accessed at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2755867>. These are so important that we are quoting from the abstract.

Among parents born from 1955 to 1984 living with adolescent offspring, 8.2% (95% CI, 7.3%-9.2%) of mothers and 9.6% (95% CI, 8.5%-10.8%) of fathers had used marijuana in the past year, and 3.5% (95% CI, 3.0%-4.1%) of mothers and 5.4% (95% CI, 4.6%-6.2%) of fathers had used marijuana on 52 days or more in the past year

Although parental marijuana use is reportedly lower than in nonparenting populations, this protective factor may be reduced with increasing marijuana use among parents.

Consistent with previous research showing increased marijuana use in adolescent offspring of parents who use marijuana or have a marijuana use disorder, our study provides further evidence on associations of parental marijuana use with offspring substance use. First, parental past-year marijuana use was consistently associated with increased unadjusted-

ed risk of past-year marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol use and opioid misuse among both adolescent and young adult offspring. Second, even if a parent had lifetime (without past-year) marijuana use or relatively less frequent use, unadjusted prevalence of past-year substance use among offspring was generally higher than those whose parents never used marijuana.

These results suggest that parental marijuana use is a risk factor for offspring substance use or misuse across a broad range of substances, including marijuana, tobacco, alcohol, and opioids, even when parental marijuana use is less frequent or in the past. Third, to further understand the specificity of the association of parental marijuana use with offspring substance use, we used multivariable models that adjusted for potential confounders related to offspring, familial, and environmental factors and found that parental marijuana use is a specific risk factor for marijuana and tobacco use by adolescent and young adult offspring and for alcohol use by adolescent offspring. Fourth, adolescent offspring's substance use appeared to be particularly associated with mother's marijuana use status. Even after adjusting for potential confounding factors, including the mother's alcohol use status, the mother's marijuana use status was associated with the adolescent offspring's past-year alcohol use. Our results indicate that the mother's marijuana use status was more than a substance use risk factor and suggest the differential and pivotal roles that a mother plays in the development of her adolescent offspring.

Environmentally mediated normalization of substance use and increased access to substances at home are possible explanations. However, we were unable to further explore mechanisms underlying parent to child transmission because the survey did not capture drug potencies, preparation type and route, whether use was predominantly at home, in the presence of children, or whether offspring had access to or handled marijuana at home. Modulators of offspring use reportedly include the sex of the parent and the child, children's ages, family dynamics, sibling and peer influences, and parental involvement or neglect. Regardless of mechanisms, clinicians and parents should be aware of the significant influence of parenting, parental marijuana use, and the poor prognosis associated with early marijuana initiation. Substance use prevention among adolescents is a public health imperative because early initiation of marijuana use is associated with more severe symptoms and consequences, including marijuana and other substance use disorders and comorbidities, such as affective, anxiety, and personality disorders.

Given the poor prognosis of substance use disorders for long-term outcomes, direct and indirect screening in medical settings of family members for marijuana use is an important and achievable goal endorsed by the US Preventive Services Task Force. A positive screening result should trigger counseling of parents on risks posed by using and storing marijuana, tobacco, or opioids at home, educating parents on risk and protective factors, and offering reassurances that substance use is modifiable. Reducing marijuana, tobacco, and other substance use by offspring living with a parent using substances is approachable by targeted strategies, such as strengthening families, or with universal prevention approaches that combine mass media campaigns adapted from tobacco cessation campaigns, including school- and community-based programs and changing statewide or community-wide policies and norms."

An article published in *USA Today* on December 16, reports about a link between marijuana use and developing psychosis and/or schizophrenia. Those sounding the alarm include the nation's "mental health czar," Elinore McCance-Katz as well as doctors in Colorado, California and Massachusetts where marijuana is legal for recreational use. They say the facts are irrefutable: Excessive use of high-THC pot and concentrated oil is linked to psychotic episodes that in some cases develop into full-blown schizophrenia. These are substances being vaped by youth.

"It is time for Americans to understand there are substantial risks with marijuana," said Elinore McCance-Katz, "This is not the government making up data."

Marijuana Use and Impaired Driving



According to March, 2019a “Drugged Driving” article on the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH) website, marijuana significantly impairs judgment, motor coordination, and reaction time, and studies have found a direct relationship between blood THC concentration and impaired driving ability.

A March 2018 posting on the *Psychology Today* website reported on a survey of 2,800 teens and 1,000 parents that Liberty Mutual Insurance and MADD conducted, which found the following:

- 33% of all teens surveyed thought driving under the influence of marijuana is legal in states where it’s legal for adult recreational use;
- 27% of parents surveyed also believed it was legal in these states;
- 93% of parents believed DUI of alcohol was dangerous but only 75% said the same about marijuana;
- 88% of teens agreed that drinking and driving was dangerous but only 68% thought driving under the influence of marijuana was dangerous.
- 22% of surveyed teens admit that driving under the influence of marijuana was common among their friends.

This 2018 study and the March, 2019 study from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) point to a societal misunderstanding common to teens and their parents that DUI of marijuana isn’t dangerous. Yet evidence shows that marijuana impairs driving skills just like alcohol. It impairs motor coordination, judgment, and slows reaction time. It’s really important for parents and teens alike to understand the importance of not smoking and driving to keep everyone safe on the road.

The potency of marijuana is far greater than ever before. Studies of new hybrid strains, particularly of medical and now non-medical marijuana are considered to be two to three times as potent as in the 1990s. And the latest neuroscience research shows that the brain does not fully mature until age 26. The driving behavioral forces in adolescents and young adults are the deep centers of the brain that fuel emotion and impulse. This is why teens tend to live in the moment, are influenced by peer pressure and get in a car with a peer who is driving under the influence. The neurons that later connect the emotional structures to the higher centers can slow things down and help them use reason, logic and consider the consequence of their actions. But this takes a long time.

Another concern is that teens are using marijuana that has greater potency than in the past, their brain development is not yet at a point where they have the capacity for making measured decisions, and have parents who have serious misunderstandings about the risks associated with young people using marijuana. In addition, this is a population that is young and does not have very much experience driving. Given these issues, driving under the influence of a strong drug is very dangerous.



You taught her to parallel park,
to signal and look over her shoulder when changing lanes.
Did you teach her the dangers of using marijuana and driving?

Everyone knows that drinking and driving don't mix. But word on the street is, not everyone knows that using marijuana and driving are a combination for destruction. In fact, **marijuana is the most common illegal drug found in drivers who die in crashes.**

Why? Because marijuana makes it hard to judge distances and to react to signals and sounds on the road. Marijuana impacts driver alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time.

Parents, set clear non drug-use expectations with your young driver.

Westchester parents, get facts, resources and tips from **PowerToTheParent.org**

