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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Know! What's Up With Weed

Marijuana has become a regular subject on the nightly news, along with heated debates between those for legalization of the drug and those against it. It seems everyone is talking about marijuana, including our children. Depending on what state you're in, the laws surrounding "weed" will vary, as well as attitudes and perceived risk of using the drug.

Regardless of where your state stands on weed, where do you stand on weed? Do your children know where you stand? Are you even sure where you stand? If you're unsure on the subject, more than likely, your children are too, which can open the door to adolescent experimentation.

In the U.S., as state laws surrounding marijuana began to loosen, attitudes began to soften. And as perceived risk of marijuana began to decrease, use of the drug increased. While this is unfortunate news, there is hope. Studies show that as knowledge on marijuana increases, use of the drug decreases.

With this in mind, we need to know what's up with weed and share that information with our children.

Marijuana has the potential to negatively impact adolescent brain development and function and cause various breathing problems. Marijuana use also changes the way many people think, impacts the choices they make and alters the way they behave.

Marijuana use in the short-term:

- Causes cognitive dysfunction when it comes to memory, perception of time, and ability to complete complex tasks and learn (some of which can become long-term issues as well);
- Negatively impacts decision-making, including increased risky sexual behavior;
- Impairs coordination and balance, leading to an increased risk of accident, injury and death.
- And while marijuana may have a calming effect on some users, it significantly increases the heart rate of others, and can cause panic and anxiety.

Marijuana use in the long-term has been linked to:

- Higher incidences of students dropping out of school;
- Poorer life outcomes and life satisfaction, including career and relationship matters;
- Poorer physical health and mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts among teens;
- Addiction – about 1 in 11 marijuana users become addicted and the odds may increase to about 1 in 6 for those who begin using in their teens.

This is certainly not what any of us want for our children. Federal law says one thing, some state laws say another. Regardless, your voice and your actions matter. Your parental influence is powerful when it comes to your children and the decisions they make. Talk to your children about the dangers of marijuana.

You can get the conversation started by asking your child what he/she knows about marijuana, and his/her opinion on the topic. Listen closely and keep your cool even if your son or daughter's opinion is not in line with yours. This is your opportunity to provide the facts, make your stance known and your expectations for non-use clear.

Sources: [MSNBC: UN report: Number of marijuana-related injuries is on the rise. June 27, 2014.](#)[Neurology Advisor: Marijuana-Related Emergency Department Visits on the Rise, December 17, 2014.](#)[National Institute on Drug Abuse: Marijuana – Selected Effects on the Brain, Body & Behavior.](#)