

Talking with Your Children About Cannabis

Having conversations about cannabis with your children can be uncomfortable for some parents. By creating a safe and receptive environment to discuss cannabis with your child you may help promote lasting, open, and positive communication. These conversations are important and should be on-going as both you and your children learn and grow.

Keep an open mind:

People (children, teenagers, and adults) are less likely to be receptive to hearing information and talking about it if they feel judged.

To have a productive conversation with your child and achieve the best outcome, try to stay open, objective, and calm.

Avoid using judgmental or accusatory-sounding words, phrases, attitudes, and body language. **And remember, be honest! It is ok not to know something.**

Get informed:

Get to know more about cannabis and the effects early cannabis use can have on a young person's life and development.

This can be an opportunity to invite your child to research the effects of cannabis use with you and learn together.

Be patient, stay positive, and be clear with your boundaries:

Having these kinds of conversations can take practice. After each talk, think about how you can improve your skills, knowledge, and approach for future discussions.

After all, this should be an ongoing conversation.

Share the facts:

When kids only rely on their friends, TV, or social media for information about cannabis, chances are they will get a lot of misinformation.

Present the facts about cannabis objectively. Approach the topic openly and ask questions:

- *What is cannabis? What have you heard from friends?*
- *Why do you think people use cannabis?*
- *Do you know how people use cannabis? What have you heard?*
- *Do you know the side effects of cannabis?*
- *Do you know long-term effects cannabis can have on young people?*
- *Do you know the signs and risks of someone becoming dependent or developing dependent behavior?*

Talk about the effects of regular cannabis on health and development, especially a child's growing brain. It can:

- Cause reductions in attention and short-term memory.
- Slow reaction time and motor skills.
- Make it harder to learn and be successful in school.

Be patient, stay positive, and be clear with your boundaries:

Developing goals is important. The idea is for family members to work together to achieve common objectives.

Goals should depend on the age of your child (children). You may have a very different set of boundaries for a teen in middle school than you would for a teen in high school.

Here are some general goals/ideas for your talk about cannabis:

- Gauge what your child already knows.
- What do they think of it?
- Research and discuss the effects of cannabis together.
- Set boundaries and goals around cannabis use.
Make them:
 - ✓ Clear ✓ Simple ✓ Specific
 - ✓ Supportive ✓ Outline consequences
- You may gain insights into the pressures your child may face and use this opportunity to find healthy coping skills together.
- Express concern and compassion while offering support.
- If the boundaries are broken, use it as an opportunity for more discussion while implementing the agreed consequences.
- Revisit these discussions often and continue to talk about the boundaries and goals while offering positive feedback



Medical Cannabis Program
mcp.doh.nm.gov

References:

- <https://www.drugfreekidscanada.org/talk/talkingcannabis/>
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- <https://www.childrencolorado.org/conditions-and-advice/parenting/parenting-articles/talking-to-kids-about-marijuana/>
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