

## **MARIJUANA USE & THE TEEN ATHLETE**

Marijuana is an illegal, mind-altering drug produced from the hemp plant, which is usually smoked by the user. THC, the main active chemical (among 400 present) in marijuana, effects changes in the brain of the user. However, what is most troubling, is that marijuana today is more potent & teens are starting use at increasingly younger ages – during crucial brain development years.

### What is the connection to a teen's mental health & marijuana use?

- \*Young people who use it weekly have double the risk of depression later in life.
- \*Teens aged 12 to 17 who smoke it weekly are three times more likely than non-users to have suicidal thoughts.
- \*Marijuana use in some teens has been linked to increased risk for schizophrenia later in years.

### What are the short-term side effects of marijuana?

- \*Memory & learning problems
- \*Difficulty concentrating, thinking & problem-solving
- \*Increased heart rate & drop in blood pressure
- \*Perception distortions involving vision, sound, touch & time
- \*Sudden feelings of anxiety, including panic attacks & paranoia
- \*Runny nose, sore throat & wheezing

### What are the long-term side effects of marijuana?

- \*May play a role in chronic respiratory problems
- \*Possibly affects the immune system
- \*Associated with motivational problems including apathy, impaired judgment, loss of ambition & an inability to carry out long-term plans

### What are the effects of marijuana on athletic performance?

- \*Impairs skills requiring eye-hand coordination & a fast reaction time
- \*Reduces motor coordination, tracking ability & perceptual accuracy
- \*Impairs concentration, and time appears to move more slowly
- \*Skill impairment may last up to 24 to 36 hours after usage
- \*Reduces maximal exercise capacity resulting in increased fatigability.
- \*Marijuana has no performance-enhancing potential
- \*Because marijuana is stored in the body fat, its effects may be long-lasting  
This casts doubts on the commonly held belief that social use the evening prior to an athletic event will not affect performance

### Can marijuana be addictive?

- \*Chronic marijuana use has been associated with the development of tolerance in which the user may have a tendency to increase the amount used.
- \*In frequent users, there can be signs & symptoms of withdrawal including anxiety, insomnia, sweating, loss of appetite & craving THC.
- \*People entering drug treatment programs often report marijuana as their primary drug of abuse, stating that they need help to stop using it.