



PEDIATRIC EXPOSURE PREVENTION

CLINICAL GUIDANCE FOR COLORADO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS



FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AGES 0-20

It is illegal for Colorado youth under the age of 21 to purchase, possess or use retail marijuana. Despite serious consequences for youth if they break the law, a recent survey found that about 5% of middle school students and 20% of high school students in Colorado report using marijuana in the last 30 days.

Tips for using this guidance: all information in italics is scripted talking points to share with parents.

SCREENING QUESTIONS



Now that marijuana is legal in Colorado, we recommend asking all parents and guardians about marijuana. This should be done in addition to asking about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use (including prescription drugs), as well as other safety measures like seat belt use and smoke detectors.

Language for all parents:

- *Now that marijuana is legal in Colorado, we would like to talk with you about it to help you keep kids safe.*
- *How do you store substances that may harm a child in your home? Such substances include alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, prescription drugs, over the counter medicines, cleaning products or other potentially harmful chemicals.*

- *Does anyone smoke in your home (marijuana or tobacco)? Does anyone in your home use any other form of marijuana, such as vaping, edibles or tinctures? Does anyone else who is a caregiver for your child use marijuana or have it in their home?*

If there is marijuana in the child's environment, provide additional education on avoidance of secondhand smoke and safe storage. If parents choose to use marijuana, they need to be educated on responsible marijuana use to protect their children's health and safety. Conversations with parents will depend on the age of the child.



SAFE STORAGE



Educate parents on safe storage practices for marijuana, medications, alcohol and other potentially harmful substances. Note that as children get older, safe storage alone may not be enough to prevent adolescents and young adults from accessing substances in the home. This is why it is important for parents and guardians to have open, honest conversations with children as they get older.

Information for all parents:

- If you have homemade marijuana products, make sure it is clear they contain marijuana (ex. labeled) and keep them locked up and out of reach of children. If you are making edibles in your home, make sure the process takes place away from children.
- Colorado law has rules if you grow marijuana in your home.
 - If children are in the home, the retail (recreational) marijuana grow must be in a separate, enclosed and locked area. Medical marijuana growers should follow the same precautions to prevent access by a child.

Language for parents of children 0-8:

- *Remember that kids can get into all kinds of things that you assume are out of reach or not of interest.*
- *Like household chemicals or bleach, marijuana, alcohol and some medications are dangerous for children.*
- *Keep all potentially harmful substances in a locked area, out of sight and out of reach of children.*
 - *Lock boxes or locked cabinets are examples of safe storage options.*
 - *If you don't have a locked area, make sure products are out of reach and out of sight of children.*
 - *Keep in mind, safe storage for young children may not stop older children or teens.*

Evidence shows that use of child-resistant packaging reduces unintentional pediatric poisonings from a wide range of hazardous household products including pharmaceutical products. In Colorado, all marijuana products are required to leave the store in child-resistant packaging. However, child-resistant packaging is not child-proof. It is meant to keep children up to age 5 from accessing potentially hazardous substances.

Language for parents of children age 0-8:

- *Research shows that child-resistant packaging can protect young children from dangerous items like medication.*
 - *If you buy marijuana products and bring them into your home, keep them in the child-resistant packaging from the store to help prevent accidents.*
- *Child-resistant packaging is not child-proof. Be sure to keep marijuana products in the child-resistant package and stored in a locked area, out of reach and out of sight of children.*
 - *If your child is 5 years or older, child-resistant packaging will not keep kids away from marijuana. This is why it is important to store all marijuana products in a locked area out of sight and reach of children.*

Language for parents of children 9-20:

- *Make sure to store any marijuana, alcohol or prescription drugs in a locked area so your child cannot get to them.*
- *Be sure those items are securely locked, not just out-of-sight. Lock boxes or locked cabinets are examples of safe storage options.*
- *As youth get older, they may get into items you think are safely stored. This is why it is also important to talk to youth about the risks of using those substances.*



SECONDHAND SMOKE

Marijuana is included in the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act, which requires indoor areas such as workplaces, restaurants, bars and hospitals and common areas of apartment buildings to be smoke-free.

Language for all parents:

- *Secondhand smoke from marijuana has many of the same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco smoke.*
- *A smoke-free environment is safest and healthiest for you and your child. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home or around your child.*



ACCIDENTAL OR INTENTIONAL INGESTION

Evidence shows that more unintentional marijuana exposures of children occur in states with increased legal access to marijuana and the exposures can lead to significant clinical effects requiring medical attention.

If a child accidentally ingests a marijuana-infused product, symptoms may include drowsiness, unsteady walking, difficulty sitting up or irregular breathing. If an older individual accidentally ingests a marijuana-infused product or uses too much marijuana, symptoms may include extreme confusion, anxiety, panic or paranoia, fast heart rate, hallucinations or delusions or severe nausea or vomiting.

If an individual accidentally ingests a marijuana-infused product or uses too much marijuana and experiences symptoms, call the poison control hotline for free, fast, expert help: **1-800-222-1222**. **If the symptoms are severe, call 911 or go to an emergency room.**

Language for parents of children 0-8:

- *Now that marijuana is legal, it is more common in homes. This means children are more likely to accidentally eat or drink marijuana.*
- *Children may be curious and confuse marijuana products for regular food or candy. If a child eats or drinks marijuana by accident, it can make them sick. Some may even need to go to the hospital.*
 - *Children that eat or drink marijuana may have problems walking or sitting up and they may start to be sleepy. Sometimes they can become so sleepy that they may start to have trouble breathing.*
- *If you are worried or your child is acting differently, call the Poison Control Hotline as soon as possible. Calling is free and you will be helped quickly: **1-800-222-1222**. **If the symptoms are bad, call 911 or go to an emergency room right away.***

Language for parents of children 9-20:

- *If a child or teen eats or drinks marijuana by accident or on purpose, it may make them feel sick. They may seem confused, anxious, panicked or feel paranoid. They also may have a faster than normal heart rate, have hallucinations or delusions or nausea or vomiting.*
- *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.***



TALK WITH PARENTS ABOUT EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA USE BY YOUTH



Adolescents and young adults who regularly use marijuana are more likely than non-users to have impairment of cognitive and academic abilities for at least 28 days after last use.

Language for all parents:

Youth who use marijuana regularly are more likely to have a hard time learning, problems remembering and lower math and reading scores.

Adolescent and young adult marijuana users are more likely than non-users to increase their use and to become addicted to marijuana in adulthood.

Language for all parents:

Youth who start using marijuana are more likely to become addicted in the future. It is harder to stop using marijuana if started at a young age.

Adolescent and young adult marijuana users are more likely than non-users to use and be addicted to alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs in adulthood.

Language for all parents:

Youth who start using marijuana, alcohol, or other drugs may be more likely to continue using later in life.

Adolescents who regularly use marijuana are less likely than non-users to graduate from high school.

Language for all parents:

Youth who use marijuana regularly may be less likely to graduate from high school.

TALK WITH PARENTS ABOUT MEDICAL MARIJUANA



Medical marijuana is legal for anyone over age 18 in Colorado that has the appropriate documented diagnosis of one of the approved medical conditions. If a youth under the age of 21 has a medical marijuana card, let parents know that there may be other options that are safer ways to treat these medical conditions. Discuss the risks/benefits of marijuana use by youth and potential alternatives, as appropriate.

Learn more about approved conditions for medical marijuana and how the laws differ for receiving a card if the patient is under age 18 at colorado.gov/cdphe/medicalmarijuana.

Language for parents of medical marijuana patients:

- *Can you tell me about why you are using medical marijuana to treat your child? How does medical marijuana help your child? How do you feel about your son or daughter using medical marijuana? Has your son or daughter's health condition improved with medical marijuana use? Have there been any problems with his or her medical marijuana use?*
- *The decision to use medical marijuana (as with any medication) is based on if the benefits of the treatment outweigh the potential risks to the young person. That is something we should discuss (or you can further discuss with your child's primary health care provider).*



TALK WITH PARENTS ABOUT DISCUSSING MARIJUANA WITH THEIR CHILDREN



Language for all parents:

- *The brain is still developing and growing until about age 25.*
- *Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in marijuana that makes a person feel “high.” THC is psychoactive, meaning it affects the brain.*
- *Because marijuana affects the brain, it can have harmful effects on youth brain development. For the best chance of healthy brain development and to allow youth to reach their full potential, youth of any age should not use marijuana.*
- *It is illegal to give retail or recreational marijuana to anyone under the age of 21.*

For parents of children age 0-8:

Encourage parents to talk to their children about safe habits when visiting another person’s home.

Language for parents of children age 0-8:

Talk to young children about not eating or drinking anything without permission. This is important for when they are at other people’s homes.

For more information, refer parents to CDPHE Marijuana Factsheets “Youth and Marijuana” and “Tips for Parents.”

For parents of children age 9-20:

Encourage parents to talk to their adolescent early and often about the risks of using marijuana and other substances. Of Colorado high school seniors who have ever used marijuana, more than one-third first tried marijuana before age 15. For more information, refer them to SpeakNowColorado.org (HableAhoraColorado.org in Spanish)

Language for parents of children 9-20:

It is important to talk with your teen about marijuana, alcohol, prescription drugs and illicit drugs early and often. For age specific tips and talking points, go to SpeakNowColorado.org (HableAhoraColorado.org in Spanish).



BREASTFEEDING

Any THC consumed by the mother enters her breast milk and can be passed from the mother’s milk to her baby, potentially affecting the baby.

If a mother wishes to breastfeed, use the referral options outlined in the resources section to help her stop using marijuana.

Language for all parents:

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in marijuana that makes a person feel “high.” THC in marijuana gets into breast milk and may harm your baby. Because of the potential risks to the baby, the American Academy of Pediatrics states that marijuana should not be used while breastfeeding.

For more information, see CDPHE Marijuana Pregnancy/Breastfeeding clinical guidance document.



PARENTING AND MARIJUANA USE

Marijuana use can affect a person's ability to make decisions. This can affect a person's ability to care for a child. It is important to know that the acute effects of marijuana use can last 8 hours or more. It is appropriate for parents to ask about marijuana or other substance use before letting a person care for a child.

Language for all parents:

- *Marijuana can affect your ability to make decisions for 8 hours or more after use. So even if you don't still feel high, marijuana may affect your judgment.*
- *Being high or even buzzed while caring for a child is not safe. Do not let anyone who is under the influence of marijuana take care of your child.*

Language for parents of children 0-8:

It is not safe for a baby or young child to sleep with an adult, especially if they are high or are under the influence of marijuana.

Talk to parents about being a good role model for their child.

Language for parents of children 9-20:

Set a good example and create a safe environment for your child. Actions speak louder than words. Do not use marijuana, alcohol or other drugs around children.

DRIVING AND MARIJUANA



Colorado law specifies that drivers with five nanograms/ml of active THC in their whole blood are considered to be driving under the influence (DUI). In Colorado, it is illegal to use marijuana in a vehicle and the open container law applies to marijuana.

Language for all parents:

- *Marijuana can affect your ability to make decisions. These effects can last 8 hours or more after use, even if you don't feel high anymore.*
- *Being high or buzzed can make some activities more dangerous. Driving a car while under the influence of marijuana is illegal and is not safe for the driver or the passengers.*

Language for parents of children 0-8:

Do not let your child ride in a car if the driver is high or before the effects of marijuana have worn off.

Language for parents of children 9-20:

- *Do not let youth ride in a car if the driver is high or has recently used marijuana.*
 - *Tell children and teens not to ride in a car if the driver is high or has recently used marijuana.*
 - *Talk to them about planning a safe ride home instead of getting into a car with a driver who has used marijuana, alcohol or other drugs.*
- *When your teen starts to drive, let them know that if they use marijuana and drive, they can get a DUI or lose their license. The consequences are the same if they use marijuana before riding a scooter or bike.*
 - *Talk to teens about planning a safe way to get home if they have used marijuana, alcohol or other drugs.*



CONCERNS ABOUT PARENT USE AND MANDATORY REPORTING

Marijuana is legal for those over age 21, like alcohol, but it is important to be sure all adults are aware of the responsible use of marijuana and other legal substances.

Are you concerned about parents using marijuana? Talk to them about your concerns and remind them to provide a safe, smoke-free environment for their child and to store marijuana in a locked area that children cannot see or reach.

If you as a health care provider have a suspicion of abuse or neglect (i.e. that the health or welfare of a child is threatened), it is your duty as a mandatory reporter to report child abuse or neglect. Report any concerns to the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline **1-844-CO-4-KIDS**

You can access the Colorado mandatory reporter training at coloradocwts.com/community-training.

In Colorado, reports to social services are handled at a county level. Procedures can be different from county to county. If you have questions about how your county addresses reports, please contact them directly.

TALKING TO PARENTS: ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT MARIJUANA



Even though marijuana is natural, natural products can be dangerous or poisonous.

Not all natural substances or plants are safe. Tobacco and poisonous berries are great examples. Marijuana contains THC, which can have harmful effects on brain development in youth, including problems with learning, memory and school performance.

Legal does not mean safe.

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

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

Doctors can recommend medical marijuana for certain medical conditions when they decide the benefit of treatment is greater than the risk for side effects. Talk to your primary healthcare provider about treatment choices that have the lowest risks and side effects.



RESOURCES



For health care providers:

- If concern for substance use disorder: Cannabis Use Disorders Identification Test (CUDIT-R): http://www.bpac.org.nz/BPJ/2010/June/docs/addiction_CUDIT-R.pdf
- Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment Guidance from SBIRT Colorado: <http://improvinghealthcolorado.org/clinical-guidelines-healthcare-providers/>
- For Colorado substance use treatment referral information:
 - 1-800-CHILDREN/1-866-LAS-FAMILIAS
 - linkingcare.org
- Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee Report: Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado: 2016 colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/retail-marijuana-public-health-advisory-committee
- Colorado Mandatory Reporter Training: coloradocwts.com/community-training
- For age specific tips on talking to youth and example talking points, visit SpeakNowColorado.org (HableAhoraColorado.org in Spanish)
- For marijuana patient factsheets and clinical guidance documents, visit the CDPHE Marijuana Health Care Provider Resources page: Colorado.gov/cdphe/marijuana-clinical-guidelines

For patients/families:

- Be sure you know Colorado's marijuana laws, visit Goodtoknowcolorado.com
- For more information on marijuana in Colorado, visit Colorado.gov/marijuana (includes Spanish language resources)
- For age specific tips on talking to youth ages 9-20 and example talking points, visit SpeakNowColorado.org (HableAhoraColorado.org in Spanish)
- For more information on keeping kids safe from alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, prescription medications and other drugs, visit SmartChoicesSafeKids.org
- Call 1-800-CHILDREN/1-866-LAS-FAMILIAS for free to connect to statewide resources for parents with any concerns, including substance use.

REFERENCES: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee's Report: Monitoring the Health Concerns Related to Marijuana: 2016 colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/retail-marijuana-public-health-advisory-committee

Wang, G.S., G. Roosevelt, and K. Heard. Pediatric marijuana exposures in a medical marijuana state. *JAMA Pediatr*, 2013. 167(7): p. 630-3.



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