MARIJUANA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
Marijuana (aka pot, weed, and scores of other names) is made from the hemp plant, _Cannabis sativa_. Common forms are a greenish-gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and/or flowers; resin (hashish); or sticky, black liquid (hash oil). The main psychoactive chemical in marijuana is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), for short.

WHAT ARE PEOPLE DOING WITH IT?
Marijuana is typically smoked or eaten (mixed in food or brewed as tea). In addition to smoking and eating the whole parts of the plant, smoking THC-rich resins extracted from the plant (dabbing) is on the rise. These extracts include:

- Hash oil or honey oil: a gooey liquid
- Wax or budder: a soft solid with a texture like lip balm
- Shatter: a hard, amber-colored solid

Extracts can deliver extremely large doses of THC, and their use has sent some people to the emergency room.

Synthetic marijuana (aka synthetic cannabinoids, K2 or Spice) is becoming more popular. These drugs, although not derived from the _Cannabis sativa_ plant, can produce similar experiences. To learn about synthetic marijuana please see [here](#).

WHAT DOES IT DO TO PEOPLE?
Marijuana is a depressant, but it can have stimulating and hallucinogenic effects too. The main short term effects are enhanced sensory perception and euphoria followed by drowsiness; slowed reaction time; problems with balance and coordination; increased heart rate and appetite; problems with learning and memory; and possibly hallucinations, anxiety, panic attacks and psychosis.

Longer term effects can include lowered IQ, mental health problems, chronic cough and frequent respiratory infections.

Because marijuana impairs short-term memory and judgment and distorts perception, it can impact school or work performance. It affects brain systems that are still maturing through young adulthood, so regular use may have a negative and long-lasting effect on cognitive development, putting you at a competitive disadvantage and possibly interfering with your well-being in other ways.

Abuse and dependence do occur, despite persistent belief that they do not. Frequent users report withdrawal symptoms: irritability, mood and sleep difficulties, decreased appetite, cravings, restlessness, and other forms of physical discomfort that peak within the first week after quitting and last up to 2 weeks. For more information and assistance, see [Substance Abuse and Addiction Resources](#) and the [SAFE program](#) offered by NYU Counseling and Wellness Services.

MEDICAL USES
Science has not resolved the question of whether marijuana has therapeutic benefits that outweigh its health risks. While there is mounting anecdotal evidence for the efficacy of marijuana-derived compounds, there are currently no FDA-approved indications for smoked medical marijuana. However, safe medicines based on cannabinoid chemicals derived from the marijuana plant have been available for decades and more are being developed as more states begin to allow certain uses of medical marijuana.

LEGAL-ISH
Although a number of states have changed laws to allow medicinal and/or recreational use there is still reason to be cautious regarding the drug and its effects. New York State’s Medical Marijuana Program is in effect as of January 1, 2016, but the new law does not allow the smokeable form of the drug and it applies only to approved medical uses, not to use for recreation. Use on any NYU property will continue to violate the [NYU policy on Substance Abuse and Alcoholic Beverages](#).

Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, US Department of Health and Human Services