



WHAT HAPPENS IF I MIX MARIJUANA AND ALCOHOL?



WHAT ROLE DOES MARIJUANA PLAY IN YOUR LIFE?

For a lot of us, it can be difficult to conduct an accurate self-assessment when it comes to issues like drug and alcohol use. It can help to have some objective questions to consider, such as:

Do you use before attending most activities?

In your current group of friends, does anyone not smoke?

Do you ever use marijuana in the morning or at bedtime, to steady your nerves, make you feel better, or help you to fall asleep?

Does your marijuana use relieve stress, anxiety, depression, or attention difficulties?

Have you ever thought about cutting back or quitting?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, consider a confidential check-in at O.P.E.N. to discuss the role that marijuana plays in your life.

A PLACE TO CHECK IN

O.P.E.N. offers students confidential check-ins, non-judgmental conversations about drug and alcohol use. Check-ins may be in a small group with other NU students or with an individual staff member. You can get personalized feedback about your use of alcohol or other drugs. Check-ins are not about telling anyone what they should or shouldn't do. We encourage students to make informed decisions and strive to reduce harm that can be associated with alcohol and other drug use and abuse.

To learn more or to set up a check-in appointment visit
www.northeastern.edu/OPEN



OFFICE OF PREVENTION & EDUCATION AT NORTHEASTERN

We encourage students to make informed decisions about alcohol and other drug use and strive to reduce the harm and negative consequences that can be associated with substance use and abuse.

www.northeastern.edu/open | open@neu.edu | 617-373-4459 |  

MARIJUANA



GET SMART, CHOOSE SMART.

A confidential, non-judgmental resource for students.



OFFICE OF PREVENTION &
EDUCATION AT NORTHEASTERN

open@neu.edu | 617-373-4459
Ell Hall - Room 307
www.northeastern.edu/open



"My check-in was eye-opening. Talking about issues related to alcohol without risk of getting in trouble was a great resource."



Northeastern

OFFICE OF PREVENTION & EDUCATION AT NORTHEASTERN



BE INFORMED

You have the right to make your own decisions. Our goal is to ensure you have the most accurate and reliable information possible to make the best decisions possible for yourself. This brochure presents recent research, along with information collected from college students about marijuana use and its effects.

- USE THIS BOOKLET TO:**
- 1) Learn some objective facts about marijuana
 - 2) Share with a friend
 - 3) Get an overview of what O.P.E.N. has to offer

BASIC CHEMISTRY
Marijuana’s main psychoactive chemical is delta-9-tetrahydro-cannabinol, commonly known as THC. Due to the variety of strains, potency, and the effects it can produce, marijuana can be categorized as a depressant, a hallucinogen, or a stimulant, making it difficult to predict how individuals may react.¹

Here are the generally accepted short-term physiological effects of each drug class : ^{2,3}

Depressants make individuals feel tired, slow, relaxed, unfocused, uncoordinated and unable to think clearly.

Hallucinogens may cause abnormal visual or auditory experiences, unusual thoughts, or altered awareness.

Stimulants can lead to anxiety, agitation, and increased heart rate.

“ISN’T EVERY ONE DOING IT?”

NO. Over 79% of Northeastern students have not used marijuana in the last month.⁴ People frequently overestimate how much alcohol or drugs people use because it’s more noticeable when someone is using than when someone is not. And often people who do indulge a lot tend to assume that everyone uses the same way that they or their group of friends do. As the numbers show, that may not be the case.



UNDERSTAND THE CHEMISTRY

- SOME ADDITIONAL FACTS ABOUT MARIJUANA AND THC :**
- THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, takes longer to metabolize than other drugs. Marijuana will show for up to 30 days after last use in a urine test, and for more than three months after last use in a hair analysis.³
 - The strains of marijuana being grown and distributed today are much more potent — with about five times the THC level on average than marijuana that was available in the 1970s.² These higher THC levels — upwards of 10% can make it difficult for heavier smokers to stop, meaning that people can and do develop a dependency on marijuana.
 - Because marijuana production is not regulated, it is impossible to know what other types of substances have been added or “laced”.¹

MARIJUANA AND ALCOHOL.
Some people believe that using marijuana helps avoid the effects from alcohol, when the opposite is actually the case. Marijuana inhibits vomiting — the body’s natural way of getting rid of alcohol in the case of alcohol poisoning. Not throwing up leads to greater risk of more severe alcohol poisoning and, consequently, more severe negative consequences.

PERSISTENT EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA USE

New research continues to evolve our knowledge about the effects of marijuana and THC.

COGNITIVE EFFECTS AND MENTAL HEALTH
Marijuana use affects attention, concentration, and short- term memory.¹ For students with a diagnosis of ADD or ADHD, using marijuana worsens these pre-existing attention difficulties. New research suggests that marijuana’s effects can last up to three days after use. These persistent effects (sometimes called “pot hangovers”) can include impaired memory and learning skills and a decrease in alertness, coordination, and depth perception.²

Heavier marijuana users have higher deficits in these areas than those who use at lower levels. Most cognitive deficits related to marijuana use seem to be temporary, with improvement after several weeks of abstinence. However, new research is showing that when it comes to deficits in attention from smoking, marijuana users may not fully catch up to non-smoking control groups.⁵



“The O.P.E.N. meetings helped me a lot in gaining a healthy lifestyle. I don’t think I could have done it without [the] awesome encouragement and support”

Marijuana can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia in individuals who are predisposed to developing mental illness.

For those with a history of anxiety or depression, marijuana use can worsen these symptoms. While some people report that using marijuana helps alleviate anxiety or depression in the short term, it can contribute to a long-term worsening of symptoms and reliance on marijuana as a coping mechanism to manage the anxiety and/or depression.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS
Marijuana raises the resting heart rate by 29 beats per minute and increases blood pressure. For those with pre-existing heart conditions, heart disease or a diagnosis of anxiety, smoking marijuana can be particularly unsafe.³

Marijuana use has been tied to increased risk of: chronic cough, bronchitis and cardiovascular disease.

Driving
Researchers are investigating the development of a *per se* limit as it relates to impairment from marijuana use much in the way that we have the .08 threshold in Massachusetts for alcohol. Know that there is a risk when it comes to driving under the influence of marijuana and that this risk appears to be present for a minimum of three hours after smoking.⁶

Addictive potential & withdrawal symptoms
Heavy marijuana use can lead to dependence. A quarter to half of those who use marijuana daily are addicted to the drug.³

Withdrawal symptoms from marijuana include: irritability, sleeplessness, decreased appetite, anxiety, and drug craving. These symptoms begin about one day following abstinence, peak at 2-3 days, and subside within 1 or 2 weeks following cessation.⁵

Sleep-related effects
While some individuals find that marijuana helps with falling asleep, it actually prevents the necessary rest and deep sleep the body requires during the remainder of the sleep cycle. Marijuana reduces REM (rapid eye movement) sleep — the type of sleep that allows people to feel rested and alert after waking up. Adequate REM sleep is also required for the development of long-term memory as well as muscle rebuilding and repair. Effects can last for several days after marijuana use and create disruption in the body’s natural sleep rhythm.

MARIJUANA VS. CIGARETTES
Marijuana often contains more toxins than tobacco. Marijuana smokers usually inhale more deeply and hold smoke in their lungs longer than those who smoke tobacco. And because marijuana burns at a higher temperature than cigarettes, there’s a potential for more damage to the lungs. Blunts and joints are usually unfiltered, which can further intensify the effects.

Marijuana burns at a higher temperature than cigarettes, there’s a potential for more damage to the lungs



NORTHEASTERN STUDENTS WEIGH-IN



“My meeting at O.P.E.N. was very helpful and interesting. I didn’t feel like I needed to withhold information because they weren’t there to get me in trouble or scold me for my habits. Definitely a good program.”

“O.P.E.N. is a way for students to reflect on habits that may affect short-term and/or long-term goals. Walking out of the appointment I felt like my head was truly on straight and that I was on the right path not only with my education and starting a career, but also with how I deal with and control certain desires or distractions.”

FOOTNOTES: **1** CESAR (2009). Marijuana Drug Profile. **2** NCJRS (2005). Marijuana Myths & Facts: The Truth Behind Ten Popular Misperceptions. **3** NIDA (2010). NIDA InfoFacts: Marijuana. **4** Northeastern University 2014 National College Health Assessment. **5** Hanson, K.L., Medina, K.L., Padula, C.B., Tapert, S.F., & Brown S.A. (2011). How does adolescent alcohol and drug use affect neuropsychological functioning in young adulthood?: 10-year outcomes. Journal of Child & Adolescent Substance Abuse, 20, 135-154. **6** Grotenhermen F, Leson G, Berghaus G, Drummer OH, Krüger HP, Longo M, Moskowitz H, Perrine B, Ramaekers JG, Smiley A, Tunbridge R. Developing limits for driving under cannabis. Addiction, 2007Dec; 102(12): 1910-7. Epub 2007 Oct 4. **7** Budney AJ, Vandrey RG, Hughes JR, Thostenson JD, Bursac Z. Comparison of cannabis and tobacco withdrawal: Severity and contribution to relapse. J Subst Abuse Treat, e-publication ahead of print, March 12, 2008.

COMBINING ALCOHOL & MARIJUANA

Alcohol, as a central nervous system depressant, slows the body down. Marijuana slows the body down, too. When used together, a drug interaction called “potentiation” happens. The effects of both are magnified, such that 1 + 1 is greater than 2 – in other words, there’s the effects of the alcohol, there’s the effects of the marijuana, and then some. The “and then some” part is really hard to predict, other than knowing that a person could be at a particular blood alcohol level yet could be showing the depressant effects much greater than that level.

O.P.E.N. is here for you

- Alcohol and drug “check-ins”– confidential, non-judgmental (We don’t tell you what you “should” or “shouldn’t” do.)
- Personalized feedback about your use, including how you compare to other students
- Resources, information and tips – drawn from facts and evidence