



# DATIA

The Drug & Alcohol Testing  
Industry Association



## Top 10 Misperceptions about Marijuana



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# Top Ten: Misperceptions about Marijuana

## 1. Marijuana is harmless.

- Associated with increased risks of mental illness, heart disease, cancer, lung disease and stroke
- Contains 3-5 times the amount of carcinogens as tobacco
- Emergency Room visits from marijuana side-effects are greater than all other substances combined

## 2. Marijuana is medicine.

- Rejected for medicinal use by prominent national health organizations
- Combustible leaf marijuana has no medical contribution
- In medical marijuana states, less than 3% of users have cancer, AIDS, glaucoma, etc.

## 3. The marijuana “high” only lasts for a few hours.

- A minimum of 24-hour acute impairment is standard after marijuana use
- Sub-acute impairment can last a week or longer
- Significant THC increases have users reporting ill-effects for days

## 4. Presence-in-system testing is unreliable because it does not measure impairment.

- Drug testing should serve as one component of a comprehensive safe and drug-free workplace program
- Testing validates the signs and symptoms of documented impaired behavior; maintaining even small amounts of THC in one’s system can cause substantial impairment
- Presence-in-system testing remains the gold standard and is upheld by the courts as valid

## 5. Marijuana is not addictive.

- Physiological dependence and withdrawal require substance abuse treatment
- 1 in 10 adult marijuana users will become dependent to the point of requiring treatment
- 1 in 6 adolescent marijuana users develop dependence

## 6. Marijuana can/should be regulated like alcohol.

- Comparisons between alcohol and marijuana regulation needs are not similar
- Comparable standardized measurements do not exist for marijuana
- The social costs related to alcohol abuse likewise exist with marijuana

## 7. Marijuana is not a gateway drug.

- 2-5 times greater risk of using other drugs when marijuana is the onset drug
- Frequency of marijuana use is significant with other illicit drugs of abuse and dependence
- Majority of individuals seeking drug treatment list marijuana as their gateway drug

## 8. Marijuana is safer than cigarettes or alcohol.

- Permanent damage to brain function and long-term mental health detriments are not safe
- Addiction, psychosis and cognitive function loss are never “safer”
- Effects of extremely high THC products found in edibles, waxes and oils are unknown

## 9. There are no long-term effects from marijuana use.

- Cognitive decline among marijuana users does not change with adult abstinence
- 17% increased risk for depression
- 40% increased risk of psychotic symptoms/disorders

## 10. It is safer to drive with marijuana in your system.

- 2-5 times increase to risk of crashes involving marijuana-impaired driving
- Driving slower does not mean driving safer
- Risks include: impaired cognitive function and slowed response times

