



Cannabis:

What Parents and Caregivers Need To Know

Cannabis (also known as marijuana, weed and pot) is legal for adult use in New York State (NYS). The effects of cannabis can be riskier for youth than adults. If you are a parent or caregiver, here is what you should know about cannabis and youth.



Legal Use of Cannabis

- Cannabis use and possession are legal in NYS for people age 21 and older.
- Cannabis can only be legally purchased from NYS-licensed dispensaries. Licensed dispensaries are listed at **cannabis.ny.gov/dispensary-location-verification** and are issued a verification seal with a QR code, known as the NYS Dispensary Verification Tool. Scan the QR code to verify that a store is a licensed dispensary. If a shop is not listed on the webpage or does not have the NYS Dispensary Verification Tool, it is not a licensed dispensary and the products sold there are not regulated.
- Adults who use cannabis should keep all cannabis products safely stored out of sight and reach of people younger than age 21.





Effects of Cannabis on Youth

- Cannabis can have harmful effects on youth, whose brains are still developing. Cannabis can negatively impact judgment, decision-making and performance in school and other activities. 
- Chronic cannabis use can have other long-term negative effects on youth.
 - Frequent cannabis use by youth can increase their risk of mental illness, including depression and anxiety. 
 - Early and frequent cannabis use by youth who are already at risk of serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, can further increase their risk of developing these conditions.

Tips for Talking to Youth About Cannabis and Other Drugs

- Be honest and open.
 - Let youth know they can ask you questions and discuss important topics.
 - Start conversations early and plan to have them often. Make yourself available for open and ongoing dialogue.
- Provide information based on facts, not fear.
 - Explain your concerns clearly. For example, you could say, “Your brain is still developing, and I want you to be the best you can be. Cannabis can get in the way of that.”
- Focus on what youth **should** do rather than what they should not do.
 - Talk about having an “exit plan” if they experience peer pressure to try cannabis or other drugs. This plan may include a verbal response, calling a trusted adult or leaving the area. Explore the options and decide together.
 - Discuss with them how cannabis could negatively affect things they care about.
- Talk about what you see about cannabis, both in media, including social media, and in real life. Share how you feel about what you see and ask them how they feel about it.
- It is OK not to have all the answers. Share what you do know and what your concerns are, and look for information together.



What To Do as a Parent or Caregiver if Your Child Uses Cannabis

- Stay calm and listen before you react. Overreacting can push your child away and make it harder for you to help them over time.
- Tell your child your concerns and give them the facts about cannabis use.
- Assess how cannabis may be affecting your child. Are they feeling pressured to use cannabis? Are they using cannabis to cope with something?
 - There are resources to help your child cope in a healthy way:
 - For free, confidential crisis counseling, mental health and substance use support, and referrals to care, call or text 988 or chat at **nyc.gov/988**, anytime.
 - To sign up for NYC Teenspace and be paired with a Talkspace therapist for messaging and live virtual sessions just for teens, visit **talkspace.com/nyc**.

- Make a safety plan together.
 - This might include having a strategy to deal with peer pressure, seeking professional help or discussing safer use. Make sure your child understands the risks of using cannabis, especially unregulated cannabis products, and how to avoid using too much cannabis by starting low and going slow.
- Report any adverse effects your child experiences after using a cannabis product or concerns about an unlicensed dispensary at **cannabis.ny.gov/report-an-incident**.

For more information on cannabis, visit **nyc.gov/health/cannabis**.

