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# Parents Matter

*Havana Area Prevention Team*

## Special points of interest:

- Marijuana Information
- Resources for Talking with youth
- Zika virus info
- HAPT Contact Info

This month's *Parents Matter* newsletter focuses on talking with your child about the dangers of marijuana. Also included are several resources that parents can use to assist in their conversation with their kids. Find out more information from the Health Department regarding the Zika Virus.

## Talking with Teens About Marijuana

With the changing laws around marijuana, it is even more important for parents to talk with their teens about the dangers of marijuana use. There are several common myths that exist around marijuana. People think it's not addictive, it's harmless and natural, and it doesn't affect driving. Truth is marijuana is especially addictive for teens.

Over the last ten years research tells us adolescence is a critical period in brain development. The human brain is still developing until about age 24! This critical period of brain development is like a "window" when part of the brain develops rapidly, and is highly sensitive to experience and environmental exposures. Introducing a foreign substance like marijuana during this time disrupts the proper brain development, thus having an impact on brain structure and function, IQ, memory, and cognitive function. Marijuana suppresses activity of the hippocampal neurons below the level needed to trigger memory information.



With chronic marijuana exposure, neuron connections involved in memory are gradually lost due to continual suppression.

Today's marijuana is a lot more potent, so it's more addictive and carries more risks to physical and mental health. Risk of serious mental illness is two- five times greater for those starting to use marijuana in adolescence, especially for those with family risk.

Marijuana and driving: studies show THC impairs attention, working memory, coordination, reaction time, and visual perception all functions needed to safely drive a vehicle. Using marijuana increases the risk of car crashes.

Marijuana not only affects the brain, it can cause heart attack and stroke. For boys, regular use may lead to breast growth, testicular tumors, lower testosterone. Marijuana smoke has same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco smoke, and smoking causes lung problems.

When discussing marijuana with your teens, it's important to know and share the facts about marijuana. Included with this article are several great resources. One in particular, [www.Teen-Safe.org](http://www.Teen-Safe.org) is a brief web course for parents of teens, which provides the latest science and true-life stories, and provides evidenced based drug prevention strategies for parents.

*\* Information taken from Talking with Teens about Marijuana Webinar, Sion Kim Harris, Boston Children's Hospital, Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research.*

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Promotes comprehensive community-wide prevention efforts.

Empowers youth & families to develop and lead healthy lifestyles.

Havana Area Prevention Team is a non-profit organization that seeks to promote:

- Healthy, happy, and responsible lifestyles for area youth and families.
- Awareness of positive alternatives and support of positive actions and activities for youth and families in and around the Havana area.

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## RESOURCES FOR TALKING TO YOUTH ABOUT MARIJUANA

1. [Good to Know Colorado](#) has a variety of resources to help parents, adults, caregivers and others speak with the young people in their life about marijuana use. Includes infographics, downloadable pdfs, facts, health effects of use, legal consequences, conversation tips for parents, and conversation tips for teachers and coaches.
2. The Partnership for Drug-Free Kid's [Marijuana Talk Kit: What You Need to Know to Talk With Your Kids About Marijuana](#) is a comprehensive guide that addresses the new challenges families face with their teens around the topic of marijuana, and equips parents with the tools they need to have productive conversations with their kids about the drug.
3. University of Massachusetts Medical School's brief brochure [Wake Up to the Risks of Marijuana](#), a guide for parents, provides brief information on marijuana facts, what parents can do to keep their children away from marijuana, and how to respond to typical statements about marijuana.
4. The National Institute of Drug Abuse offers two short booklets for parents and children to review the scientific facts on marijuana (1) [Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know](#), and (2) [Marijuana: Facts for Teens](#), as well as FAQ's about marijuana, starting the conversation and communicating the risks of marijuana to teens.
5. The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence provides information for families and friends on [Talking with Children](#) to learn the key role of parents in beginning the conversation about alcohol and drug abuse.
6. [Teen-Safe.org](#) developed by the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research at Boston Children's Hospital is a brief Web-course for parents of adolescents which provides the latest science and true-life stories to parents to promote their understanding of the health and psychosocial risks of adolescent alcohol and drug use, and gives parents evidence-based strategies for adolescent substance abuse prevention.
7. [Above the Influence](#) is an interactive website for teens offering videos and valuable insights on staying drug free, handling peer pressure, doctor Q&A, and advice from teens for teens on behalf of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

## Zika Virus Health Alert

Zika is a mosquito born disease spreading in Latin America and the Caribbean. While the disease is usually mild in adults, reports show that it may affect brain development in unborn children. Until more is known, pregnant women should consider postponing travel to Zika affected areas.\*

**How do you catch it?** The Zika virus is spread through a mosquito bite from a mosquito carrying the virus. It can also be sexually transmitted from a man who was bitten by an infected mosquito or from an infected pregnant woman to her unborn baby. If you travel to infected areas, take steps to keep from being bitten. Use insect repellent. Wear long sleeves, pants, and socks, and sleep in rooms with screens.

**What are the symptoms?** Illness is typically "mild" and therefore many do not know that they are sick. Symptoms can include fever, rash, joint pain, conjunctivitis (red eyes).

**Where does Zika occur?\*** Zika began in Africa, it can also be found in Southeast Asia, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico. See the <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html> for an updated list.

This information was provided from Mason County Health Department Emergency Preparedness Dept. for questions contact (309) 210-0110 ext. 228