

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Research on Marijuana Use and Lung Health

According to the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, marijuana was the most used illicit drug, with 22.3% of people aged 12 or older (64.2 million) using it in the past year. Among people aged 12 or older, the percentage who used marijuana in the past year increased from 19.0% (53.2 million) in 2021 to 22.3% (64.2 million) in 2024.

According to the American Lung Association (ALA), the health effects of marijuana are determined in large part by how it's consumed. Marijuana is smoked using pipes, bongos, paper-wrapped joints, blunts and other devices including those that heat or vaporize marijuana. Marijuana can also be consumed through dozens of different products including e-cigarettes, candy, brownies and other baked goods, capsules, beverages and many more.

Smoke is harmful to lung health. Whether from burning wood, tobacco or marijuana, toxins and carcinogens are released from the combustion of materials. Smoke from marijuana combustion has been shown to contain many of the same toxins, irritants, and carcinogens as tobacco smoke. There is concern about causing harmful health effects, especially among children as they are developing.

According to the ALA, research shows that smoking marijuana causes chronic bronchitis and marijuana smoke has been shown to injure the cell linings of the large airways, which could explain why smoking marijuana leads to symptoms such as chronic cough, phlegm production, wheeze, and acute bronchitis. Smoking marijuana has also been linked to cases of air pockets in between both lungs and between the lungs and the chest wall, as well as large air bubbles in the lungs among young to middle-aged adults, mostly heavy smokers of marijuana.

Smoking marijuana can harm more than just the lungs and respiratory system—it can also affect the immune system and the body's ability to fight disease, especially for those whose immune systems are already weakened from immunosuppressive drugs or diseases, such as HIV infection. The smoke effects the lungs' first line of defense against infection by killing cells that help remove dust and germs as well as causing more mucus to be formed. In addition, it also suppresses the immune system.

Smoking marijuana clearly damages the human lung, and regular use leads to chronic bronchitis and can cause an immune-compromised person to be more susceptible to lung infections. Due to

the risks it poses to lung health, the ALA strongly cautions the public against smoking marijuana as well as tobacco products.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) provides up-to-date information on tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, mental health and other health-related issues in the United States. Information from NSDUH is used to support prevention and treatment programs, monitor substance use trends, estimate the need for treatment and inform public health policy. NSDUH is directed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The American Lung Association (ALA) is a voluntary health organization whose mission is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy, and research. The Association is concerned about the health impacts of marijuana use, especially on lung health and cautions the public against smoking marijuana because of the risk of damage to the lungs. For more information, please visit <https://www.lung.org>.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in Glen Cove whose mission is to eliminate alcohol and substance use in Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about cannabis use—especially in youth as their brains are developing. The Coalition is conducting a prevention awareness campaign entitled “Keeping Glen Cove SAFE; Underage Marijuana Use,” to educate and update the community regarding marijuana use and its negative consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE’s website to learn more at www.safeglencove.org.