



Steer teens away from using marijuana, driving under influence

by Trisha Koriath, Staff Writer

If you have a teen driver in the house, you've probably discussed the dangers of drinking and driving. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges parents also to talk with their teens about the dangers of driving under the influence of marijuana.

New laws have made marijuana easier to find in many states. Like alcohol, driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal.

Teens should never drive or ride with someone who is under the influence of marijuana.

You may have heard people say that marijuana use is not dangerous. This is not true. Marijuana causes problems with memory, attention and problem-solving in kids. It also affects their judgment, concentration, reaction time and coordination, according to the AAP. This can lead to car crashes.

Driving after using marijuana is impaired driving. A recent study found that drivers weave in the lane the same way after marijuana use as they do after alcohol use. Alcohol is the most common cause of crash for impaired drivers of all ages. Marijuana is the second most common, according to government data.

More than 9% of drivers ages 16-20 admit to having driven under the influence of marijuana. These youths already are at a high risk of crashing because they are not experienced drivers.

Mixing marijuana and alcohol adds to the crash risk, especially for teens. The body does not process marijuana like alcohol. The dose, strength and way it is used (e.g., smoked, vaped or eaten) affects each person differently.

The AAP opposes marijuana use in children younger than 21 years. The AAP encourages parents to start talking about the dangers of drug use when their child is in elementary school. Give clear rules and set positive examples.

Parents are role models. They should never drive while impaired. If you use alcohol or drugs, have a designated driver. If you use marijuana in front of your teens, they are more likely to use it themselves even if you tell them not to.

Before letting your teen drive, set specific rules that must be followed. Download the free AAP Parent-Teen Driving Agreement at <http://bit.ly/teendrivingagreement>.

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