

# American Drug Testing

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

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## DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORK-

# Marijuana: Workplace Risk, Part II

### Health Effects

Marijuana abuse is associated with many detrimental health effects. These effects can include respiratory illnesses, problems with learning and memory, increased heart rate, and impaired coordination.



A number of studies have also shown an association between chronic marijuana use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and schizophrenia.

Long-term marijuana abuse can lead to addiction. Studies conducted on both people and animals suggest marijuana abuse can cause physical dependence. Withdrawal symptoms may include irritability, sleeplessness, decreased appetite, anxiety, and drug craving. Someone who smokes marijuana regularly may have

many of the same respiratory problems that tobacco

*“increased rates of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and schizophrenia.”*

smokers do, such as daily cough and phlegm production, more frequent acute chest illnesses, a heightened risk of lung infections, and a greater tendency toward obstructed airways. Cancer of the respiratory tract and lungs may also be promoted by marijuana smoke. Marijuana has the potential to promote cancer of the lungs and other parts of the respiratory tract because marijuana smoke contains 50 percent to 70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than does tobacco smoke. Marijuana's damage to short-term memory seems to occur because THC alters the way in which information is processed by the hippocampus, a brain area responsible for memory formation. In one study, researchers compared marijuana smoking and non-smoking 12th-graders' scores on standardized tests

of verbal and mathematical skills. Although all of the students had scored equally well in 4th grade, those who were heavy marijuana smokers, i.e., those who used marijuana seven or more times per week, scored significantly lower in 12th grade than nonsmokers. Another study of 129 college students found that among heavy users of marijuana critical skills related to attention, memory, and learning were significantly impaired, even after they had not used the drug for at least 24 hours. Of an estimated 113 million emergency department (ED) visits in the U.S. during 2006, the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) estimates that 1,742,887 were drug-related. DAWN data indicate that marijuana was involved in 290,563 ED visits.

### Treatment

From 1997 to 2007, the number of admissions to treatment in which marijuana was the primary drug of abuse increased from 197,840 in 1997 to 287,933 in 2007. The marijuana admissions represented 12.3% of the total drug/alcohol admissions to treatment during 1997 and 15.8% of the treatment admissions in 2007. The average age of those admitted to treatment

for marijuana during 2007

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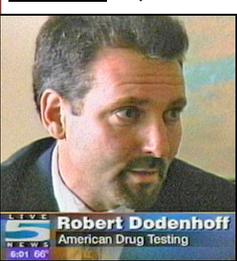
- How to identify illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia
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- How to recognize workplace problems related to employee use of alcohol and drugs
- How to avoid enabling and common supervisor traps



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### The Drug-Free Workplace Advisor



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was 24 years. Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy. *Part III: Arrests & Trafficking*

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