

Study: Medical marijuana advertising linked to teen use

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Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

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Teens who see ads for medical marijuana are more likely to use the drug recreationally, according to a new study.

“This work highlights the importance of considering regulations for marijuana advertising that would be similar to rules already in place to curb the promotion of tobacco and alcohol across the United States,” lead author Elizabeth D’Amico, Ph.D., senior behavioral scientist at RAND, said in a news release.

Twenty-nine states and Washington, D.C., have legalized medical marijuana, while nine states and Washington, D.C., have legalized recreational marijuana use. However, the drug can be harmful to developing adolescent brains and has been linked to cognitive impairments, mental health issues and higher likelihood of abuse, according to the study.

To assess the impact of advertising on teens, researchers surveyed nearly 5,000 middle school students in southern California in 2010 and followed them for seven years. California legalized medical marijuana in 1996.

During the study period, the number of students who had seen an ad for medical marijuana rose from 25% to 70%, according to the study “Planting the seed for marijuana use: Changes in exposure to medical marijuana advertising and subsequent adolescent marijuana use, cognitions, and consequences over seven years” (D’Amico EJ, et al. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* May 17, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2018.03.031>).

Those who were exposed to the most advertising were more likely to have used marijuana recently, have positive views of it and expect to use it in the next six months. They also reported more negative consequences, which authors said could be due to heavy use.

“As more states legalize marijuana for medical or recreational uses, we must think carefully about the best ways to regulate marijuana advertising so that we can decrease the chances of harm occurring, particularly for adolescents,” Dr. D’Amico said. “We must also continue to address beliefs about the effects of marijuana as part of our prevention and intervention efforts with this age group.”

Resources

- [AAP policy "The Impact of Marijuana Policies on Youth: Clinical, Research, and Legal Update"](#)
- [Information for parents about the Academy’s stance on marijuana](#)
- [AAP research collection on marijuana](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

- [Office of Adolescent Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

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