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Marijuana fact checking ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I read your posts concerning marijuana, and wish to clarify a few matters. First of all, you refer to lung cancer as "the most clear-cut physical disease resulting from continued use," primarily because joints are often smoked unfiltered, and held in the lungs longer than tobacco. You neglect to note that joints are not the most common method of MJ consumption. Pipes are used more often than joints because the consumer is smoking purely herb, as opposed to rolling paper. Also, water filters in pipes and bongos are several times more effective in filtering carcinogens and particles than cigarette filters. Most tobacco smokers in this country do not use water filters.

Your point concerning the "best high" is deceptive in that holding the smoke for longer than a few seconds does not add to the intensity of the high. Notwithstanding this information, you are generally correct in stating that MJ smoke contains more tar and hydrocarbons than tobacco, but you neglect to state that the quantity of MJ per user typically smoked is less than tobacco by a factor of ten. One rarely hears of "pack-a-day" pot smokers. Also note that in over 10,000 years of use, there are no documented fatalities attributed to the consumption of marijuana. Incidentally, while you are correct that possession can get you booted from school, users should not be excessively "nervous" as one will not get arrested for marijuana consumption in NYC.

B-real

Answer

Dear B-real,

Points well-taken about marijuana. The responses were certainly not meant to sound like the film "Reefer Madness" and all those people who say smoking marijuana only leads to harder drugs. However, the guy who wrote the question was definitely sounding a bit paranoid and needed to know some information so that he could make his own decisions about when, why and how much he wants to smoke. Lastly, people do get busted for smoking joints in New York. It may be infrequently, or no one you know has gotten arrested, but it is illegal and people have been arrested solely for marijuana consumption.

Additionally, your theories about filtered pipes and bongs may hold water, but not much else. Many studies have shown that waterpipes and bongs are actually counterproductive in decreasing the amount of solid particulates, or tar, one inhales from smoking marijuana. Tar is the harmful waste by-product made directly from burning leaves like tobacco or marijuana. This lack of difference in tar inhalation levels can be partially attributed to the fact that THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, also tends to stick to the filter, leading to less potent marijuana. A weaker puff makes it more likely for the user to smoke more of it in order to achieve a high, and therefore inhale more tar along the way. The good news is that these filters may still be effective at trapping other toxins and poisons from marijuana smoking, such as hydrogen cyanide, aldehydes that promote cancer, and carbon monoxide. More research is still needed to determine the specifics of what and how much the filter can absorb.

Thanks for prompting some clarification.

Alice!

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Published date:

Sep 02, 2011

Last reviewed on:

Mar 11, 2014

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