



SCIP NEWS BITES

www.lmep.com

October 2012

Regular Teen Marijuana Use Shown to Lower IQ

A new study suggests teens who frequently use marijuana are more likely to experience a significant and irreversible reduction in their IQ. The study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, followed 1,037 children born in Dunedin, New Zealand, from birth until the age of 38. Those who started using cannabis below the age of 18 – while their brains were still developing – suffered a drop in IQ.

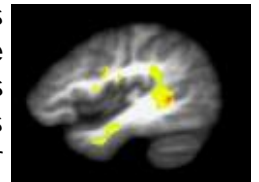
Participants were tested for IQ at age 13, before they had tried marijuana, and then again, 25 years later at age 38. Participants were also given five interviews between ages 18 and 38, including questions related to their marijuana use. The study was controlled for factors like years of education and use of alcohol or other drugs that might also have an effect on IQ.

Researchers compared IQ scores at age 13 to the score at age 38 and found a drop only in those who had started regularly smoking pot by age 18. Regular adolescent use was defined as those who used at least weekly before turning 18. Those deemed marijuana-dependent in three or more surveys had a drop averaging 8 points. If a person had average intelligence and was smarter than 50% of the population, dropping 8 points would give them a score only higher than 29% of the population.

Researchers also had family members and friends of the participants confidentially rate them on attention and memory skills, and those who had lost IQ points showed problems in these areas.

Among participants who'd been dependent at 18, and in at least one later survey, quitting didn't remove the problem. IQ declines showed up even if they'd largely or entirely quit using pot at age 38, analysis showed.

While many teens don't think smoking pot is risky or harmful to health, the study shows the likelihood that marijuana harms the adolescent brain. Researchers didn't find the same IQ dip for people who became frequent users of pot after 18, suggesting pot use is especially dangerous for the developing brain and may have neurotoxic effects. "Parents should understand that their adolescents are particularly vulnerable," said lead researcher Madeline Meier, a post doctoral researcher at Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy. "The effect of cannabis on IQ is really confined to adolescent users. Our hypothesis is that we see this IQ decline in adolescence because the adolescent brain is still developing and if you introduce cannabis, it might interrupt these critical developmental processes."



(Sources: www.cbsnews.com, 9-10-12; www.bbc.co.uk/news/health, 8-28-12; <http://healthland.time.com>, 8-28-12)



A Dangerous New Trend

Salt & Ice Challenge



Teachers at various schools have been reporting this new trend surfacing among their students.

In this challenge, students are wetting their skin, putting salt on the wet area and then holding ice on the salt as long as they can stand the pain. The salt and ice cause a chemical reaction and burns the skin.

Youth are using this as a dare to show the amount of pain they can withstand; not knowing that the pain they are feeling is that of a chemical burn that may need medical treatment if severe enough.

Signs to watch for are blistering, bubbling or oozing skin. Cleaning all of the salt out of the wound is imperative, or it will continue to burn the skin.



BEWARE: A New Version of the Choking Game is Surfacing

Youth are now seeking the same brief high they get with the choking game by causing themselves to pass out. This is done by taking deep breaths for one minute while they are squatting, then standing up and blowing out as hard as they can with a finger in their mouth until they pass out; or by taking 10 very deep breaths with their head between their legs then standing upright and having a friend punch them in the sternum, causing them to pass out. This is a dangerous activity children are engaging in, in order to achieve a brief high. The high is the result of depriving the brain of oxygen, then having the oxygen rush back into the brain. This "game" is also known as space monkey, knockout or flat liner.

Children who participate in variations of this "game" may exhibit any of the following symptoms or behaviors:

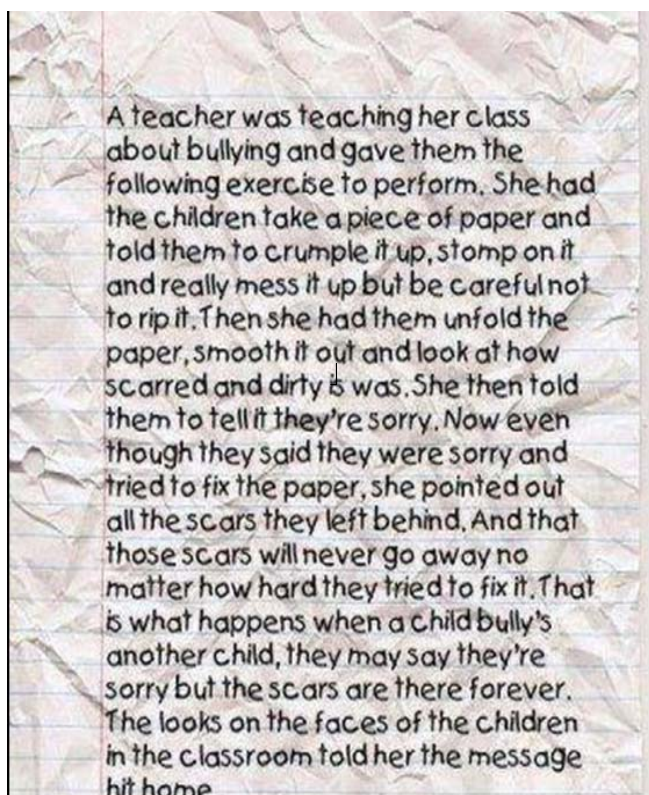
- Marks or bruises on the neck
- Secretive behavior, irritability, hostility
- Bloodshot eyes
- Bleeding under the skin of the face and eyelids
- Severe headaches, often frequent
- Wearing clothing that covers the neck, even in warm weather
- Confusion or disorientation after being alone for a period of time
- The presence of unusual items such as dog leashes, ropes, scarves, bungee cords, and belts

If you suspect your child or other children at your child's school have engaged in this dangerous behavior, you need to take quick action. Talk to your child about the real dangers of depriving the brain of oxygen, including coma, possible brain damage, broken bones, hemorrhages of the eye, and even death.

(Source: www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/Choking/choking_game.html)

A Teachable Moment

With the start of the school year, many schools are already working on their anti-bully efforts. Here is an exercise to consider trying with your students:



Red Ribbon Week

Celebrate being Drug Free!

Red Ribbon Week is the oldest and largest drug prevention campaign in the country. Although the dates can vary slightly depending on the organization and source, Red Ribbon Week generally takes place the last full week in October, with the weekends before and following included as celebration dates.

This year Red Ribbon Week will be celebrated:

October 20-28, 2012

This year's Red Ribbon theme is:



For activity ideas, supplies or more information check out these websites:

www.redribbonweek.com
www.redribbon.org
www.imdrugfree.com