

PRESENTER HANDBOOK

About Stop & Imagine

The Stop and Imagine curriculum is based on the latest recommendations from youth marijuana prevention experts. This includes open, calm and judgement-free communication, fact-based information, and positive reinforcement instead of scare tactics.

The presentation includes 3 specific learning objectives:

1. Marijuana's Effect on the Lungs
2. Marijuana's Effect on the Brain
3. Marijuana's Effect on Students' Futures

These learning objects are correlated with important data points regarding youth marijuana use in Colorado.

Most important is risk perception. According to the Healthy Kids Colorado Surveys of 2015 and 2017, risk perception among youth remains largely unchanged. In 2013 54% of youth agreed that marijuana use is risky. In 2015 48% of youth agreed, and in 2017 52% of youth agreed. Youth who believe there are risks associated with marijuana use are 76% less likely to use marijuana than those who did not. It is important as a health care provider to teach young people that, just like tobacco and other drugs, there are serious health risks associated with using marijuana.

Additionally, both marijuana experts and young people have identified that positive messages about a healthy future resonate. The final section of this curriculum helps young people focus on what they want in the future, and how staying drug free can help them achieve that. This messaging is consistent with other leading prevention groups in Colorado, including the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Curriculum Overview

The Stop & Imagine Curriculum contains the following sections:

1. Introduction (Slides 1 & 2): In the introduction section you will give students a brief greeting. The most important component of the introduction is to explain your role as a health care provider. As a physician you have a unique ability to discuss marijuana, particularly the health effects, with young people.
2. Section 1 (Slides 3-6): This section will discuss the health effects of marijuana. This section focuses on lung health and brain health. In addition to talking to students about health risks, you will conduct two hands on activities with them. First, a straw breathing exercise that highlights how the lungs may feel with heavy marijuana use (via smoking). Second, a neurotransmission game that highlights how any form of marijuana can affect brain function.
3. Section 2 (Slide 7): This section helps students think about what they want in the future. Perhaps a specific career or the ability to drive and have freedom. You will discuss your path to becoming a physician, and encourage the students to think and talk about their future dreams and goals. In this section you will also introduce the Stop & Imagine poster contest. The school you are presenting at will have selected a method of their own for the poster contest and you will instruct the students based on the school's decision.
4. Conclusion (Slide 8): You will wrap up your presentation by letting the students know about trusted adults they can talk to, including parents/guardians and physicians.

Throughout your presentation we encourage you to listen to the students if they have questions, be open in your answers, stay positive and have fun. You are a great role model for students to hear from. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of these young people!

Introduction (Slides 1 & 2)

You can briefly greet the students, and then move right into explaining who you are. Talk about the school that you went to: that you graduated from college, and then went to additional school to become a physician. You can explain what you do and who you take care of. You can let the students know why you know about the health effects of marijuana and position yourself as an expert who is there to help young people. You can talk about why it was important to you to talk to the students about marijuana use. Be genuine and show that you care about the students and meeting them at their level.

Section 1 (Slides 3-6)

Slide 3

Here you can set up what you will talk about in section 1. Is marijuana bad for you? Talk to the students about how there are people like you, who have an education in science and health, working on that question. Be open with the students that we don't know everything about marijuana. However, we do know there are some health risks when someone, especially a young person, uses marijuana

Slide 4

Move from slide 3 to slide 4 and let the students know you know it can be hard to understand if marijuana is bad for you, because lots of people say that isn't true. They might hear from classmates or adults that marijuana is a good substitute for other drugs or alcohol. Let students know that the very best way for them to stay healthy is to not use any drugs at all, even if they are drugs that are legal for people who are older than 18 or 21.

You can let the students know that you understand they might be confused about marijuana because some people use it as a medicine, including people who aren't 21 yet. Talk about the medicine you might prescribe as a physician. What medicine could help one person but hurt another person if they took it? Just because something is medicine doesn't mean that it is good for everyone.

Tell the students that today you are going to talk to them about two of the big health risks of marijuana: how it effects their lungs and how it effects their brain.

Slide 5

How does marijuana hurt the lungs? Explain to the students that smoking marijuana can irritate the lungs just like a tobacco cigarette can. Marijuana that is smoked may contain some of the same harmful things, like carbon monoxide or tar, that a tobacco cigarette contains.

Explain to the students that heavy marijuana users can have a cough or wheeze even when they aren't using marijuana. You're going to do an activity that will help the students understand what that feels like.

Activity: Straw Breathing Exercise

This exercise demonstrates to students how smoking marijuana decreases lung capacity and the ability to hold enough oxygen.

Instructions

1. Hand out drinking straws to students. Instruct them to place the straw in their mouth, hold their noses, and breathe through the straw only.
2. Instruct students to stand and run in place for 15 to 30 seconds while breathing through the straw. Students with asthma or other respiratory conditions may not want or be able to participate in this exercise. You could have them participate by handing out the straws or time fellow students who are running in place.

After the activity ask students how they feel. Was it hard to breath like that? Let them talk about what the experience was like. Conclude the activity by reminding students that frequent marijuana use can make it hard to breath, just like when they were breathing through the straws.

Slide 6

Explain to students that marijuana can be bad for their brains. Students might hear people say that you don't have to smoke marijuana, there are other ways to take it. But no matter what, there are risks involved in using marijuana. No matter how a person uses marijuana their brains will be affected.

Take some time to explain to the students how marijuana effects brain function. Take this section slow and reiterate concepts if students seem confused.

In our brain we have cells that are called neurons. Those neurons need to talk to each other to allow our brains to work. That's where something called neurotransmitters come in. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that allow neurons to talk to each other. That's really important, because neurons need to talk to each other so we can do things like balance, remember, and learn.

Marijuana has a chemical in it called THC. Doctors and scientists like you have studied what THC does when it is in our bodies. They have found out that THC can make neurotransmitters not work. That means that our neurons can't talk to each other.

Let's do an activity to see how that works.

Activity: Neurotransmission Spoon Game

Have the students line up in two equal lines, facing each other. If there are a lot of students they can form more than one set of two lines. Hand out the spoons. One line gets the "healthy" spoons, and one line gets the "unhealthy" spoons. Give a first student at each side of the line a ping pong ball. The first and last student in the line are neurons, and all the students in the middle are neurotransmitters. Instruct the students that when you say "go," they will pass the ping pong ball from spoon to spoon, just like information would travel via neurotransmitter from neuron to neuron. The goal is to be the first side to get the ping pong ball to the end without dropping it. If the ball is dropped they have to start over.

Check that the students understand how to play. When ready, give the "go" signal. Let the students complete the game. Likely, the side with the healthy spoons will finish first.

When everyone has completed the game, talk to the students about it. Was it easier for the side with the healthy spoons to move the ping pong ball to the end? Using marijuana in any form is risky because it harms the neurotransmitters and makes them like the unhealthy spoons, unable to transmit information, just like the spoons couldn't easily move the ping pong ball.

When someone uses marijuana they might have problems with their memory or learning, they might not be able to think clearly or problem solve, they might have trouble balancing, or even feel scared or nervous. Think of all that your brain has to do, we don't want to ever do something that could harm it.

Section 2 (Slide 7 & 8)

Slide 7

This section introduces the final learning object: how marijuana can put students' futures at risk.

You've talked to the students about the health risks, but it's important to stress that besides their health, using marijuana, like using any drug, can get in the way of the things that they want.

Ask the students what they want to be when they grow up. If you need to, you can push to engage them in conversation. Have they dreamed about playing a professional sport? What about serving in the military? Help them think through some dreams or careers they want.

Using marijuana has consequences that might get in the way of that. Using, buying or having marijuana is illegal for people under the age of 21. If a person gets caught with marijuana, it can get in the way of all the things they want to do. You might not be allowed to be on sports teams or do other activities like music or art. If you dream about going to college one day, being caught with marijuana could

cause you to lose scholarships or loans. Lots of jobs don't allow their employees to use marijuana, so don't let it get in the way of the job you might want in high school to earn extra money, or the job you dream about having one day.

Talk to the students about how you became a doctor. Even if you didn't always know you wanted to be a doctor you always worked hard towards it. You graduated from high school and went to college. You went to even more school that allowed you to become a doctor. Connect with the students about what it meant to you to be able to achieve your goals. It wasn't just about having a career, but doing something that you wanted, that made you feel good. Expand and make the story personal. Be sure to tell the students that, even if their dream isn't to become a doctor, they all deserve to reach the goals they set for themselves. They shouldn't let anything get in the way of all the potential they have.

Slide 8

Introduce the Stop & Imagine Poster Contest.

Tell the students that to help share what they've learned, they are going to draw posters and have a poster contest. They will draw a poster that has a positive message about being marijuana free. What will their life look like when they don't use marijuana? Their teacher will hand out more information so they know what kind of poster to draw.

You can explain how the poster contest will work based on the school's structure (information will be provided to you in a hand out). The most exciting thing? The winner of the poster contest will get a winning ribbon and \$100!

Conclusion (Slide 9)

Thank the students for listening. Let them know the final thing you would like to share with them is that they can always talk to an adult they trust about marijuana or any drugs they are concerned about. You have a handout that they will take home to parents or guardians about marijuana. They can also talk to someone like a teacher or a doctor, like you. If the students are ever worried about drugs and go to see a doctor or nurse they can talk about what makes them worried, now or when they get older. Share how you are there to help young people like them. Talk briefly about how you and people like the nurses you work with can help students if they ask you about feeling pressured to use drugs, or feel like they are ever unsafe.

Thank the students again, and let them know you enjoyed talking to them and are excited to see the posters that they do!