

MARIJUANA – HOW TO IDENTIFY & HELP^[L1]

The following information was shared with the staff as part of Professional Development at a meeting on 5 September 2016. It is published on the website to provide information that may be of use to parents and students of the school.

Appearance & Names

Dagga looks a bit like the tobacco one can buy in shops. It consists of dry leaves of the cannabis sativa plant. The dried leaves are brown or dark green in colour and looks a bit like mixed herbs one buys in the supermarket. The cost of dagga varies from area to area, but is generally inexpensive.

Marijuana or weed can be consumed as a shredded, dry leafy product or as marijuana oil and resin. These last two are sold under the names “hash” or “hashish.” Hash may be found in flat cakes. Hash oil will be amber or brown and may be sold in small glass bottles. When you’re looking for signs of weed use, you would be looking for small bags of brownish-green leaves that look like herbs, small chunks of a powdery brown substance or very small bottles of brown liquid.

Also known as Grass, boom, joint, zol, dope, skyf, weed, hash, majat (a low grade dagga), poison, peperskyf, ganja, Swazi Gold, Malawi Gold, mabange, insangu, imya, lebake, splif, Transkei Colly, Durban poison.

Things to look out for:

- Pipes
- Shredded leafy debris
- Cigarette rolling papers
- Very small bottles of oil
- Eyedrops
- A sweet burnt scent on the user or in the room

Signs of Marijuana Use

It usually takes only a few minutes for the effects of dagga to take hold. A high can last from 15 minutes to several hours and can bring about feelings of mild euphoria, occasional hallucinations, increased perceptions (these are not always realistic), short-term memory loss, giggling, possible anxiety and occasionally paranoia.

Physical effects include thirst and an increase in appetite, an increase in heart and pulse rate, a dry mouth and red eyes. When taken with alcohol it can sometimes lead to aggression.

Physical Changes to look out for:

- Bloodshot or glassy, red eyes
- Fast heart rate
- Sleepy, lethargic
- Lack of coordination
- Increase cravings for snacks
- Increased thirst
- Weight gain or loss
- Lung and respiratory problems related to smoke inhalation
- Poor hygiene

Change in Actions:

- Confusion and lack of focus
- Unusually talkative
- Dropping studies or usual activities
- Misjudging time

- Secretiveness
- Socially inappropriate behaviour such as loud talking and puzzling bursts of laughter
- Loss of interest in activities formerly enjoyed
- Loss of motivation
- Concentration difficulties
- Memory lapses
- Difficulty learning new things

Mental Health & Marijuana

Hallucinations, paranoia and delusional behavior can be symptoms of weed use that is very potent, or consumption of a large amount. Research shows a link between marijuana use and mental health problems like depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, short-term psychosis (when people lose touch with reality and see, hear, or believe things that aren't real, doctor's call that psychosis), and schizophrenia. While it's not clear if marijuana causes these conditions, it can make them worse.

People who use marijuana may have delusions. That means they hold on to untrue or strange beliefs. They might also have hallucinations. That's when they imagine to hear or see things that doesn't exist.

Their speech might be unclear and their behavior disorganized. They may also show signs of depression, anxiety, and sleep problems. It could be a struggle for them just to get through their day. There are often warning signs leading up to psychosis. They may start to act differently. Their work or school performance could start to slip. They may also feel paranoid, start avoiding others, have trouble expressing ideas, or slack off in their personal hygiene.

Long Term Health Effects of dagga

Smoke inhalation can lead to lung cancer, delayed sexual development in men, suppression of ovulation in women, memory lapses and lack of concentration.

How to help

- Be extra vigilant and keep a look out for the signs of marijuana use as detailed above.
- When on duty (residences, sports, tours, meal times – everywhere!), be a constant presence.
- Go into the rooms of students and your tutees (in particular) and use it as an opportunity to check for signs of marijuana use. This is not a room search, it is just the reassuring presence of adults.
- Please talk to your tutees and students and let them know that there is help available.
- Ask students to come & speak to you, if they have concerns or suspicions about a friend who they think may be using marijuana.
- Be aware of people on campus who may be selling marijuana

If you have concerns, what are the next steps?

Please let the Deputy Principal (Pastoral) know so that she can follow up – your name will not be used. We have measures in place – testing; drug contracts; counselling; medical assistance that can help students and stop the drug usage before it is too late.

The approach described above is to help students, not to “bust” them. However it must be noted that drug possession and use is listed in the Major Rules in the GIB, enabling the College to take disciplinary measures if necessary.

Websites

www.webmd.com

<http://www.narconon.org>

<http://www.health24.com>