

[IMAGE]

Marijuana or Alcohol: Which Is Worse for Your Child?

By Editorial Staff

We know, we know: On the one hand, this is a question that doesn't merit an answer, because for the vast majority of parents (we're accounting for a few uninformed outliers), marijuana and alcohol are taboo for all children until they reach adulthood. That's the vision; now here's the reality: Thirty-three percent U.S. high-school students have tried alcohol at least once and 39 percent have tried marijuana, according to [national statistics](#).

Shocking? Not if you really think about it, unfortunately. But now our question becomes more relevant, because if children – yes, perhaps even *your* child – is experimenting with alcohol and/or marijuana, we're sure you want to know which is the worse offense (if there is a worse offense) in terms of their health, specifically their brain health. Now here's the answer, according to a four-year study published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

Based on annual usage reports from nearly 4,000 teens and the results of computer-based cognitive tests, the adolescent brain is negatively impacted by regular marijuana use to a greater extent than alcohol use. Marijuana use has a long-term impact on cognitive abilities, particularly recall and short-term memory, [perceptual reasoning](#) and inhibition; even worse, these deficits remain in effect even after adolescents stopped marijuana use.

Now that we've answered that question, here's another one: Is your child experimenting with alcohol and/or marijuana? Before you answer "no," consider the statistics we mentioned above and the results of this study ... and keep in mind that adolescent alcohol and marijuana use are associated with a laundry list of other negative social, academic and health consequences.

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