

# Refuse, Remove, Reasons: Pot More Potent

## On the Video...

According to a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the number of marijuana users in drug treatment programs has tripled in the last ten years. And yet the actual number of pot smokers is going down. How is this paradox explained?

Sixteen-year-old Victor Ramirez started smoking pot when he was 13. "I liked it. I liked it and I didn't even know I liked it till I started doing it like, shhh, it came a day to day thing," he remembers.

Trouble has followed him ever since. "Got arrested at school for selling marijuana...got put on probation because of marijuana," he says. And now he's at a drug treatment facility.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the number of marijuana users in treatment is rising because the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana has risen as well.

"What they found is that the level of THC has now gone to about 8 ½ percent. What's important to understand about that is that's a drug four times more potent than the 2 percent THC content of all the marijuana that's used in research," explains Sue Rusche, president of National Families in Action.

Experts say it's more powerful and more addictive.

"The stronger the drug, or the more quickly it gets to the brain, makes it more addictive," says Rusche.

The problem is, she says, there are still too many adults who don't believe pot is a dangerous drug. "Parents who grew up in the '70s and smoked a little pot need to understand that the drug their kids are using today is quite different, and four times stronger."

She says parents should also know that the relapse rate for addicts is over 50 percent: over half will leave treatment and continue using the drug.

That is a serious concern for Victor. "I'm not sure that I am going to quit because it's gonna be hard. It's just gonna be hard."

## What We Need to Know...

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among America's youth. Research also shows that marijuana use is three times more likely to lead to dependence among adolescents than among adults and that the earlier kids start using marijuana, the more likely they are to become dependent on this or other illicit drugs later in life.

Parents are the most powerful influence on their kids when it comes to drugs. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, two-thirds of youth ages 13 to 17 say losing their parents' respect is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs.

## Conversation Starters...

- We all encounter temptations and have difficult decisions to make in life. What temptations do you face?
- Knowing the risks, why would someone try marijuana?
- What would you do if someone offered it to you? Do you know how we feel about that?