

Consequences of Adolescent Substance Abuse: New Findings

There have been increasing concerns regarding the consequences of cannabis use in adolescents. Many states including Ohio have initiatives that would potentially make cannabis more easily available to young people. However, the full consequences of cannabis use in youth is not fully known.

A recent study published in *Lancet Psychiatry* may shed light on the sequelae of adolescent cannabis use. In this study there was integration of multiple long running longitudinal studies from Australia & New Zealand. In a large population they found clear and consistent associations and dose response relations between the frequency of adolescent cannabis use and multiple adverse outcomes for young adults. They found that those who were daily users before the age of 17 years had clear reductions in their chance of completing high school and obtaining a degree. They also found that these daily users in adolescence had increased odds of later dependence on cannabis as a young adult and use of other illicit drugs. They also found they were at higher risk for suicide attempts. Their interpretation is that prevention of delay of cannabis use in adolescent will likely have broad health and social benefits and suggest that efforts to reform cannabis legislation should be carefully examined with the goal of reducing cannabis use in adolescents due to their findings of adverse effects impacting development later in life.

From: Silins E, Horwood LJ, Patton GC, Fergusson DM, Olsson CA, et al. (2015) Young adult sequelae of adolescent cannabis use: an integrative analysis. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 1(4):286-93. doi: 10.1016/S2215-0366(14)70307-4.

In an associated study they found that adolescent cannabis abuse was associated with a greater proportion of overall rate of non-progression with a formal education than adolescent alcohol abuse. In this study they compared weekly and daily use of either adolescent cannabis or alcohol abuse and found that the heavy cannabis abuse had a higher association of non-progression with regards to formal education than adolescent alcohol abuse. They concluded that adolescence cannabis use is a better marker of lower educational attainment than adolescent alcohol use and identifies an important target for preventative intervention.

From: Silens, E., Fergusson, D.M., Patton, G.C., Horwood, L.J., Olsson, C.A., Hutchinson, D.M., Degenhardt, L., Borschmann, R.J.T., Rohan, Coffey, C., Toumbourou, J.W., Najman, J.M., Mattick, R.P., for the Cannabis Cohorts Research Adolescent substance use and educational attainment: An integrative data analysis comparing cannabis and alcohol from three Australasian cohorts, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2015.08.034>