



**mind**  
matters

*THE BODY'S RESPONSE TO*

# MARIJUANA

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*Hi there! Mind Matters is a series that explores the ways that different drugs affect your brain, body, and life. In this issue, we are going to talk about marijuana.*

## What is marijuana?

Marijuana is made of dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds from the *Cannabis sativa* or *Cannabis indica* plant. Some people use marijuana to get high. You might have heard marijuana called by other names, like **"weed"** or **"pot."**

People think that because marijuana is natural, it can't be bad for them. But marijuana has **hundreds of chemicals** in it that can affect your body in many ways.

87%

In 2017, only **13%** of **8th graders** had ever used marijuana in their lives.\*

13%



Used marijuana



Have not used marijuana

## How do people use marijuana?

People can smoke marijuana rolled up like cigarettes, put it into tea, or cook it into food or candy. Some people think that it is safer to inhale marijuana using electronic cigarettes, or vaporizers, because they are not inhaling smoke. This is called **"vaping."** But studies show that vaping can be harmful because you still inhale chemicals.



## How does marijuana work?

### Marijuana changes how the brain works.

It attaches to parts of your brain, and for most people, it tells your brain and body to feel calm and relaxed.

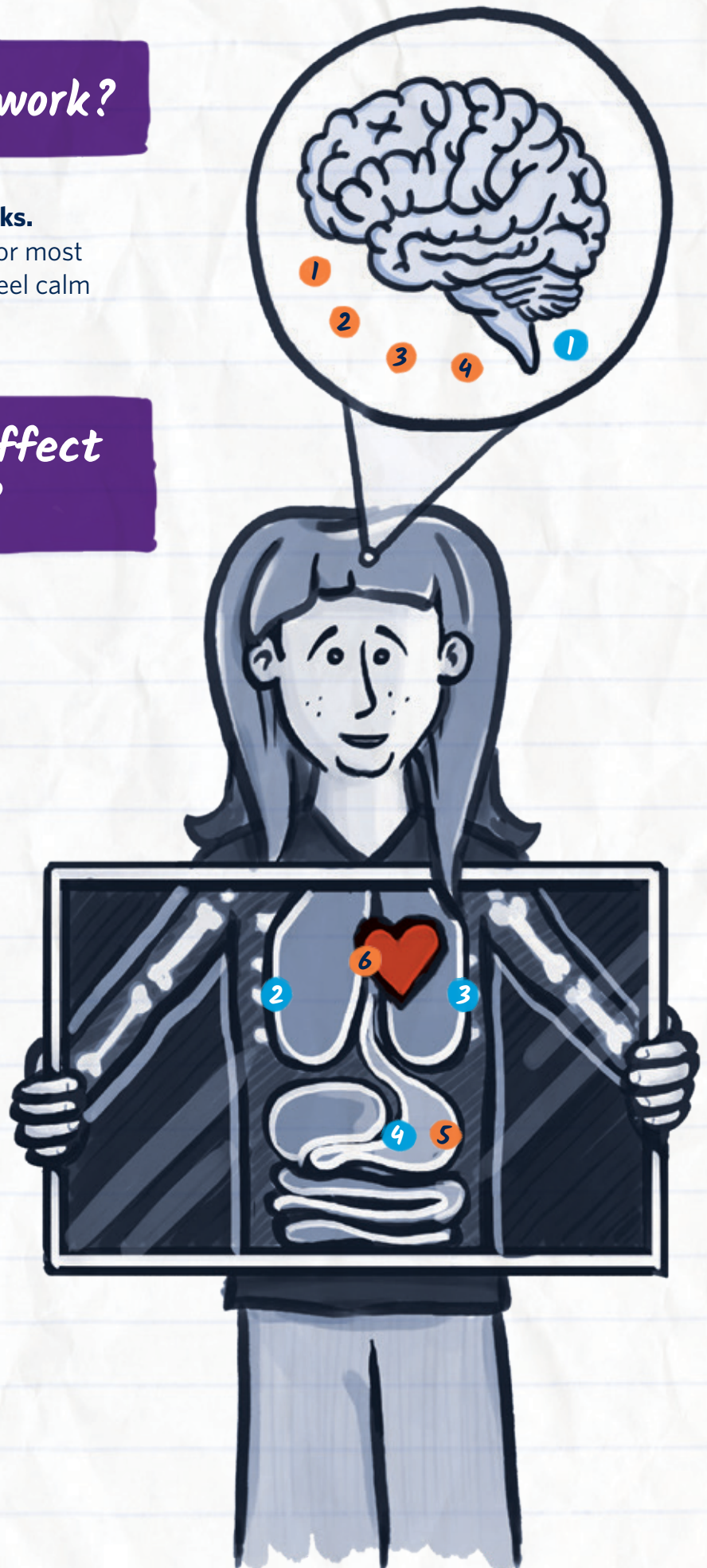
## How can marijuana affect your brain and body?

### Short-Term Effects

- 1 Feel less coordinated and react more slowly
- 2 Altered sense of time
- 3 Feeling relaxed
- 4 Anxiety, fear, distrust, or panic (when taken in high doses)
- 5 Feeling really hungry
- 6 Fast heart rate

### Long-Term Effects

- 1 Problems with memory and learning skills
- 2 Problems with breathing
- 3 Cough or lung sickness
- 4 Severe nausea and vomiting



## Can you become addicted to marijuana?

**Yes, you can.** Over time, marijuana can change the way your brain works. If you stop using marijuana, your body can get confused and you can start to feel sick. This makes it hard to stop using marijuana. **This is called addiction.**

Anyone can become addicted to marijuana. It doesn't matter how smart you are or where you live. There is no way to predict who is likely to become addicted.



*Did you know that using marijuana as a teen can change how your brain grows?*

That's because your brain is still growing and changing until you get into your 20s.

## What about medical marijuana?

Research shows that some of the chemicals in marijuana can help people with cancer and other serious diseases. But this doesn't mean that anyone who is sick should use marijuana. The government has approved a few medicines in pill form that have marijuana chemicals in them but don't make you high. **Only a doctor can give you these medicines.** This is not the same type of marijuana that people usually smoke. Scientists are looking at ways that marijuana can help with other conditions, but it will take years of research.

## Is marijuana legal?

Laws about marijuana for recreational use vary state by state but it is **not legal for teens** in any state.





What if someone I  
know needs help?

If you think a friend or family member has a problem with drugs, talk to an adult you trust, like a parent, coach, or teacher, right away. Remember, treatment is available and people can get better.

For more information, go to [teens.drugabuse.gov](https://teens.drugabuse.gov).



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*Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

\*Johnston, et al. (2018). *Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use: 1975–2017: Overview, key findings on adolescent drug use*. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.