

Marijuana vs. Alcohol

Brains love to be intoxicated.

From ants to elephants, brains love to be intoxicated and we cannot reverse this hard-wiring.

Marijuana is NOT a dangerous and addictive drug, alcohol is.

Marijuana does not cause lung cancer, it prevents lung cancer and even reduces the risk in cigarette smokers.

Marijuana is NOT a "gateway" to harder drugs. Alcohol and cigarettes are the proven gateway drugs. Marijuana is widely used, before enjoying a dinner party, before a game of ultimate Frisbee, and some couples might imbibe while enjoying a romantic evening together. Concert-goers have a puff or two before or during a show – which might result in dancing or enjoying the music more. And there is overwhelming evidence that it improves creativity

None of this is "bad" or "wrong" or "immoral." It is simply something they choose to do specifically instead of alcohol, and for good reason! Alcohol is more toxic, more addictive, more harmful to the body, and more likely to lead to domestic violence, child abuse and rape than marijuana.

Safer for the Consumer

Many people die from alcohol. Nobody dies from marijuana. More than 37,000 annual deaths are caused by alcohol (CDC), plus accidental deaths. Not one from marijuana!

People die from alcohol overdoses. There has never been one fatal marijuana overdose. The *American Scientist*, reported that alcohol is one of the *most toxic* drugs and just 10 times the amount used to get the desired effect could lead to death.

Marijuana is *the least toxic* drug, with never one marijuana overdose death.

The health-related costs associated with alcohol far exceed those for marijuana. Costs for alcohol consumers are eight times greater than those for marijuana consumers, according to an assessment recently published in the *British Columbia Mental Health and Addictions Journal*. The annual cost of alcohol is \$165 per user, compared to just \$20 for marijuana.

Alcohol damages the brain. Marijuana does not. Marijuana actually has neuroprotective properties and is good for the brain. For example, teens who used marijuana as well as alcohol suffered significantly less damage to the white matter in their brains.

Alcohol is linked to cancer. Marijuana actually prevents it! Alcohol is associated with seven different cancers; the esophagus, stomach, colon, lungs, pancreas, liver and prostate. Marijuana use actually *reduced* the likelihood of lung and head and neck cancers. If you are concerned about marijuana being associated with lung cancer, you may be interested in the results of the largest case-controlled study ever conducted to investigate the respiratory effects of marijuana smoking and cigarette smoking. Released in 2006, the study, conducted by Dr. Donald Tashkin at the University of California at Los Angeles, found that marijuana smoking was *not* associated with an increased risk of developing lung cancer. Surprisingly, the researchers found that people who smoked marijuana actually had *lower* incidences of cancer compared to non-users of the drug.

Alcohol is more addictive than marijuana. Addiction researchers have consistently reported that marijuana is far less addictive than alcohol based on a number of factors. In particular, alcohol use can result in significant and potentially fatal physical withdrawal, whereas marijuana has not been found to produce any symptoms of physical withdrawal. Those who use alcohol are also

much more likely to develop dependence and build tolerance.

Alcohol increases the risk of injury to the consumer. Marijuana does not. Many people who have consumed alcohol or know others who have consumed alcohol would not be surprised to hear that it greatly increases the risk of serious injury. Research published this year in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*, found that 36 percent of hospitalized assaults and 21 percent of all injuries are attributable to alcohol use by the injured person. Meanwhile, the *American Journal of Emergency Medicine* reported that lifetime use of marijuana is rarely associated with emergency room visits. "Cannabis...does not seem to increase risk-taking behavior." Interestingly enough, some research has even shown that marijuana use has been associated with a *decreased* risk of injury.

Safer for the Community

Alcohol contributes to aggressive and violent behavior. Marijuana reduces violence. An article published in the *Journal of Addictive Behaviors* reported that "alcohol is clearly the drug with the most evidence to support a direct intoxication-violence relationship," whereas "cannabis reduces the likelihood of violence during intoxication."

Alcohol is a major factor in violent crimes. Marijuana is not. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimates that 25-30% of violent crimes in the United States are linked to the use of alcohol. According to a report from the U.S. Dept. of Justice, that translates to about *5,000,000 alcohol-related violent crimes per year*. By contrast, the government does not even track violent acts specifically related to marijuana use, as the use of marijuana has not been associated with violence. (Of course, we should note that marijuana *prohibition*, by creating a widespread criminal market, *is* associated with acts of violence.)

Alcohol contributes to the likelihood of domestic violence, child abuse, rape and sexual assault. Marijuana does not.

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