

Pointers For Parents

Smoking And Toking: Teens In Double Jeopardy

(NAPSA)—The best way to reduce smoking is to make sure kids never start. However, despite decades of effort and significant progress, during 2002, five million young people smoked cigarettes. More than six thousand try them for the first time *every day*. But there's another smoking risk that parents may not consider when they hear the term "smoke-out": that risk is marijuana.

Research shows that youth who smoke cigarettes are *14 times* more likely to try marijuana as those who don't. How serious is the problem? Take a look at the figures: In 2002, nearly four million teens smoked marijuana. And for every kid who tries tobacco for the first time, one also tries marijuana. The number of young people who first try a cigarette or use marijuana in the U.S. each year is greater than the population of North Dakota, South Dakota, Delaware, Rhode Island and Montana combined.

Tobacco and marijuana are also related in the damage they cause to the body. Lung disease, cancer and other health problems don't distinguish between the two. In fact, the amount of tar and carbon monoxide marijuana smokers are exposed to from smoking a joint is three to five times greater than from smoking tobacco. Research shows that marijuana can be addictive, and that it's more addictive in young people than in adults. Nationwide, more kids are in drug treatment for marijuana use than for all other illicit drugs combined.

What can be done? Parents are the most important influence on



Parents are the most important influence in preventing teens from smoking.

their teens when it comes to preventing tobacco and marijuana use, as well as other risky behaviors. They can help keep kids tobacco- and drug-free by closely supervising their time, knowing who they are with and setting clear rules.

Many parents are living up to their responsibilities, helping prevent more kids from ever lighting up. The daily first-use figures for both marijuana and cigarettes, as high as they are, have dropped 16 percent and 11 percent, respectively, in recent years.

In America's effort to reduce teen smoking, it's important to remember that there are two "smokes" being fought. If someone you know is at risk, you can get the facts to help them at www.TheAntiDrug.com. The site also offers a free pamphlet called "Wake Up to the Risks of Marijuana: A Guide for Parents." The pamphlet can also be ordered by calling 1-800-788-2800.