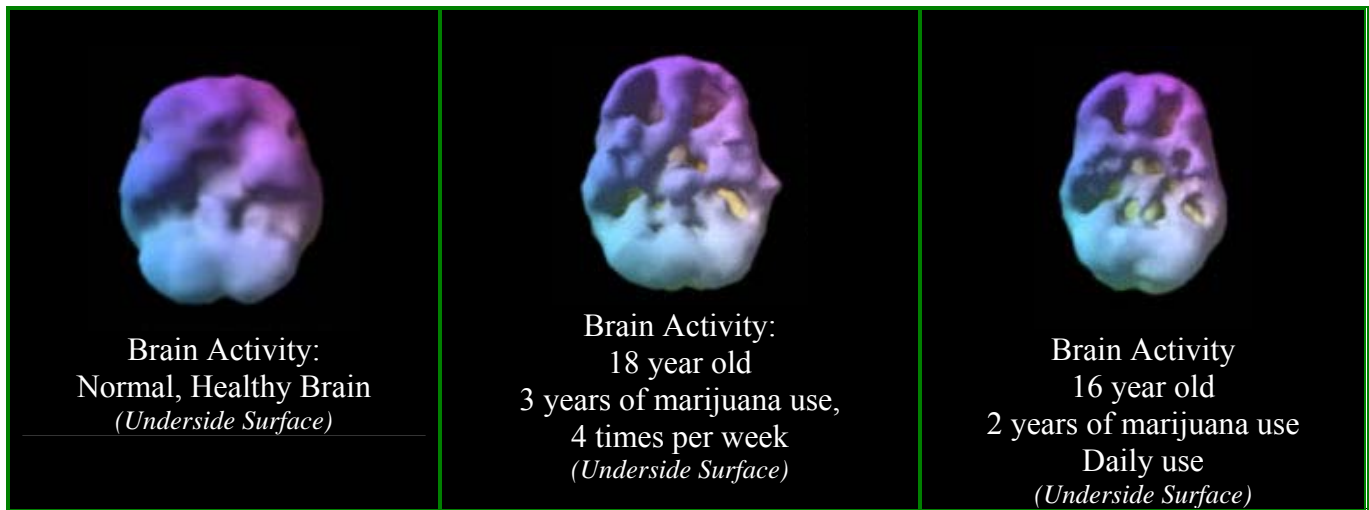


Marijuana and Mental Illness (con't)



Brain Effects

The effects of smoking marijuana typically cause decreased activity in the posterior temporal lobes bilaterally. The damage can be mild or severe, depending on how long a person used, how much use occurred, what other substances were used and how vulnerable a particular brain is. *“High Resolution Brain SPECT Imaging - Marijuana Smokers with AD/HD”, Daniel Amen, M.D., Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, Volume 30, No. 2, April-June 1998.*

<p>NORMAL</p>	<p>Here we see a scan of a healthy brain of a non-marijuana user, taken from a SPECT scanner, which shows brain activity by detecting blood flow. The largely smooth surface shows that blood flow to this brain is good. Compare this with the pits and disruptions seen in the other image, where there is poor or no blood flow in the brain. This can have a dramatic effect on behavior, depending on which area of the brain is affected. Often these behavioral changes will be blamed on a psychological problem, when, in fact, there is a genuine biological basis for them – a basis caused by substance abuse.</p>
<p>CANNABIS</p>	<p>This should come as a shock to those who do not believe cannabis damages the brain. Cannabis squeezes down blood flow, leading to brain cell damage and death. Dr Amen’s research has found that it particularly affects the temporal lobes - the greatly enlarged black spots on either side of the middle of the picture. This area is responsible for memory. Dr. Amen suggests that this is the reason for the poor memory and lack of motivation that chronic users often report. This patient was a 16-year old boy who had used marijuana every day for two years. The scan came as a great shock to him.</p>
<p>Source: <i>“Change Your Brain, Change Your Life”, Daniel G. Amen, M.D., professor of psychiatry and human behavior at the University of California, Director of the Amen Clinics.</i></p>	

- In Ireland, the number of children treated for mental disorders caused by smoking cannabis has quadrupled since the government downgraded the legal status of the drug, according to an article in the Sunday Times (September 18, 2005). Addaction, an Irish drug charity, told the Times that “three months after police stopped arresting anyone found in possession of small amounts of the drug, the overall number of users treated for such conditions rose 42%.”