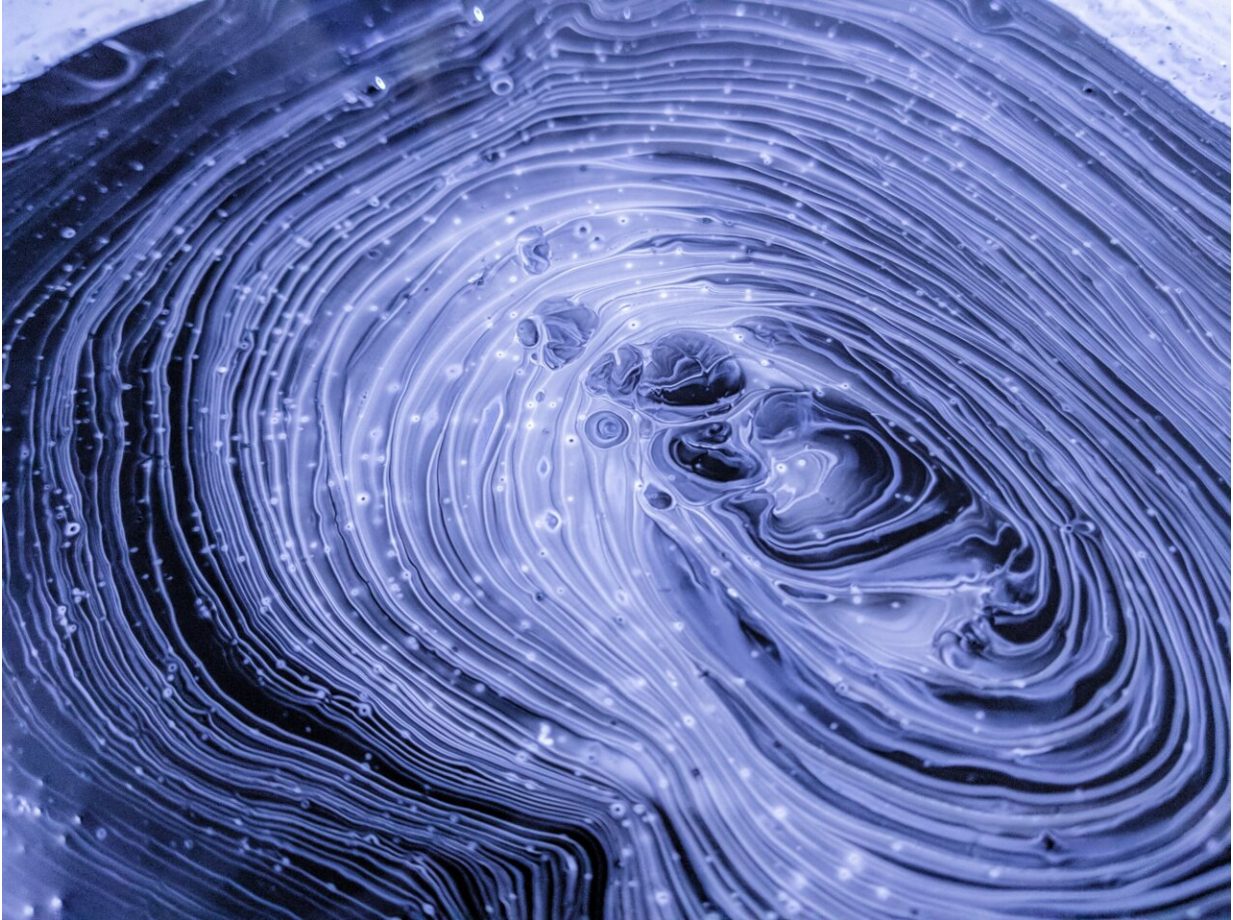


# Regular marijuana use linked to more sex

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The jury's still out on rock 'n' roll. But the link between sex and at least one drug, marijuana, has been confirmed.

A study by investigators at the Stanford University School of Medicine indicates that, despite concerns among physicians and scientists that frequent marijuana use may impair sexual desire or performance, the opposite appears more likely to be the case.

The findings, published online Oct. 27 in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, are based on an analysis of more than 50,000 Americans ages 25-45. And they're unambiguous.

"Frequent marijuana use doesn't seem to impair sexual motivation or performance. If anything, it's associated with increased coital frequency," said the study's senior author, Michael Eisenberg, MD, assistant professor of urology. The lead author is Andrew Sun, MD, a resident in urology.

## **Hint of a causal connection**

The study does not establish a causal connection between marijuana use and [sexual activity](#), Eisenberg noted. But the results hint at it, he added. "The overall trend we saw applied to people of both sexes and all races, ages, education levels, income groups and religions, every health status, whether they were married or single and whether or not they had kids."

The study is the first to examine the relationship between marijuana use and frequency of [sexual intercourse](#) at the population level in the United States.

"Marijuana use is very common, but its large-scale use and association with sexual frequency hasn't been studied much in a scientific way," Eisenberg said.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, more than 20 million adult Americans are current marijuana users. With the drug's legalization

for medical or recreational use in 29 states, that number is climbing. But despite marijuana's growing status as a recreational drug, its status as a procreational drug remains ambiguous: On one hand, there are reports of erectile dysfunction in heavy users, and rigorous studies have found reduced sperm counts in men who smoke it; on the other hand, experiments conducted in animal models and humans indicate that marijuana stimulates activity in brain regions involved in sexual arousal and activity.

## **Looking at survey responses**

To arrive at an accurate determination of marijuana's effect on intercourse frequency, Eisenberg and Sun turned to the National Survey of Family Growth, sponsored by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey, which provides data pertaining to family structures, sexual practices and childbearing, reflects the overall demographic features of the U.S. population. Originally conducted at regular intervals, the survey is now carried out on an annual basis. It explicitly queries respondents on how many times they've had intercourse with a member of the opposite sex in the past four weeks, and how frequently they've smoked marijuana over the past 12 months.

The investigators compiled answers to those questions for all years since 2002, when the survey first began collecting data on men as well as women. They included data from respondents ages 25-45 and excluded a small percentage (fewer than 3 percent) of respondents who had failed to answer one or more relevant questions.

In all, Eisenberg and Sun obtained data on 28,176 women averaging 29.9 years of age and 22,943 men whose average age was 29.5. They assessed these individuals' self-reported patterns of marijuana use over the previous year and their self-reported frequency of heterosexual intercourse over the previous four weeks.

Some 24.5 percent of men and 14.5 percent of women in the analysis reported having used marijuana, and there was a positive association between the frequency of marijuana use and the frequency of sexual intercourse. This relationship applied to both sexes: Women denying marijuana use in the past year, for example, had sex on average 6.0 times during the previous four weeks, whereas that number was 7.1 for daily pot users. Among men, the corresponding figure was 5.6 for nonusers and 6.9 for daily users.

In other words, pot users are having about 20 percent more sex than pot abstainers, Eisenberg noted.

## **Positive association is universal**

Moreover, Eisenberg said, the positive association between marijuana use and coital frequency was independent of demographic, health, marital or parental status.

In addition, the trend remained even after accounting for subjects' use of other drugs, such as cocaine or alcohol. This, Eisenberg said, suggests that marijuana's positive correlation with sexual activity doesn't merely reflect some general tendency of less-inhibited types, who may be more inclined to use drugs, to also be more likely to have sex. In addition, coital frequency rose steadily with increasing marijuana use, a dose-dependent relationship supporting a possible active role for marijuana in fostering sexual activity.

Nevertheless, Eisenberg cautioned, the study shouldn't be misinterpreted as having proven a causal link. "It doesn't say if you smoke more [marijuana](#), you'll have more sex," he said.

Provided by Stanford University Medical Center

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