THE FACTS Marijuana *Health Effects*

Shasta County Public Health

Marijuana often harms people's health. When a person smokes marijuana, problems begin immediately and last for up to three hours. When you eat or drink something that has marijuana in it, the effects begin 30 minutes to an hour later and they last about four hours. When someone uses the drug regularly, they may experience more severe and longer-lasting effects.

Potential Benefits

Smoking or eating herbal marijuana is **not** approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). However, the FDA has approved the use of pills containing THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) as one option for:

- Cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy who have persistent nausea and vomiting
- People with AIDS wasting syndrome who have no appetite

Other symptoms and diseases should be treated with other non-marijuana, FDA-approved medications.

Shasta County Health & Human Services Agency

Effects of short-term ("acute") use

- Most feel euphoria (a pleasant feeling), although a small number feel unpleasant feelings
- Slowed reaction time and decision-making; lack of judgment, impulse control and coordination; changed perception and attention; drowsiness – all of which can lead to motor vehicle crashes
- Problems with short-term memory
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure, which can lead to increased risk of heart attack and other heart problems

Effects of long-term ("chronic") use

- Shortness of breath after exercise, chest tightness, wheezing, coughing (one joint has the same effect as 2-5 tobacco cigarettes)
- Bronchitis, emphysema and lung cancer
- Problems with memory, learning, thinking and problem-solving, which can lead to difficulties at work and in school
- Numerous mental health problems, including addiction in some
- Lower sperm count
- Increased infections (especially lung)