

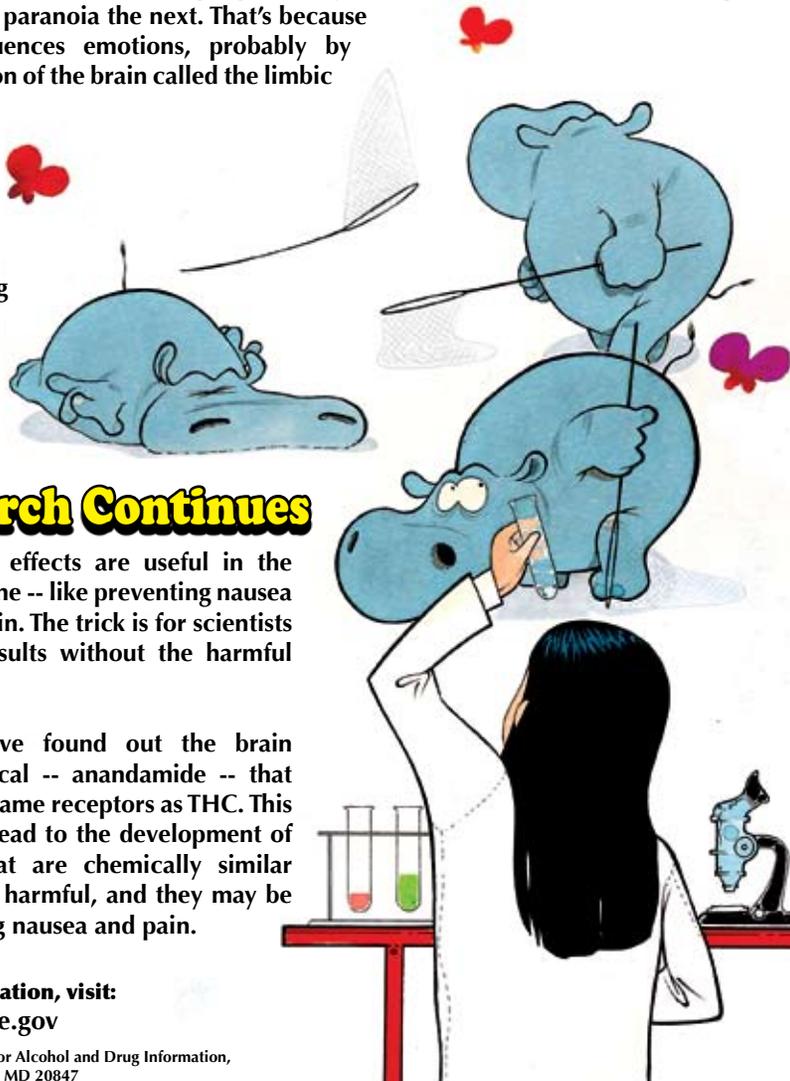
Hippocampus

One region of the brain that contains a lot of THC receptors is the hippocampus, which processes memory. When THC attaches to receptors in the hippocampus, it weakens short-term memory.

The hippocampus also communicates with other brain regions that process new information into long-term memory. (That's how you can remember today's math lesson or a new friend's phone number.) In the brain, under the influence of marijuana, new information may never register-- and may be lost from memory.

Maybe you've heard that in some people, marijuana can cause uncontrollable laughter one minute and paranoia the next. That's because THC also influences emotions, probably by acting on a region of the brain called the limbic system.

And don't forget this: THC can make something as simple as driving a car really dangerous.



The Search Continues

Some of THC's effects are useful in the world of medicine -- like preventing nausea and blocking pain. The trick is for scientists to get these results without the harmful effects.

Researchers have found out the brain makes a chemical -- anandamide -- that attaches to the same receptors as THC. This discovery may lead to the development of medications that are chemically similar to THC but less harmful, and they may be used for treating nausea and pain.

For more information, visit:
www.drugabuse.gov

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information,
P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847

1-800-729-6686

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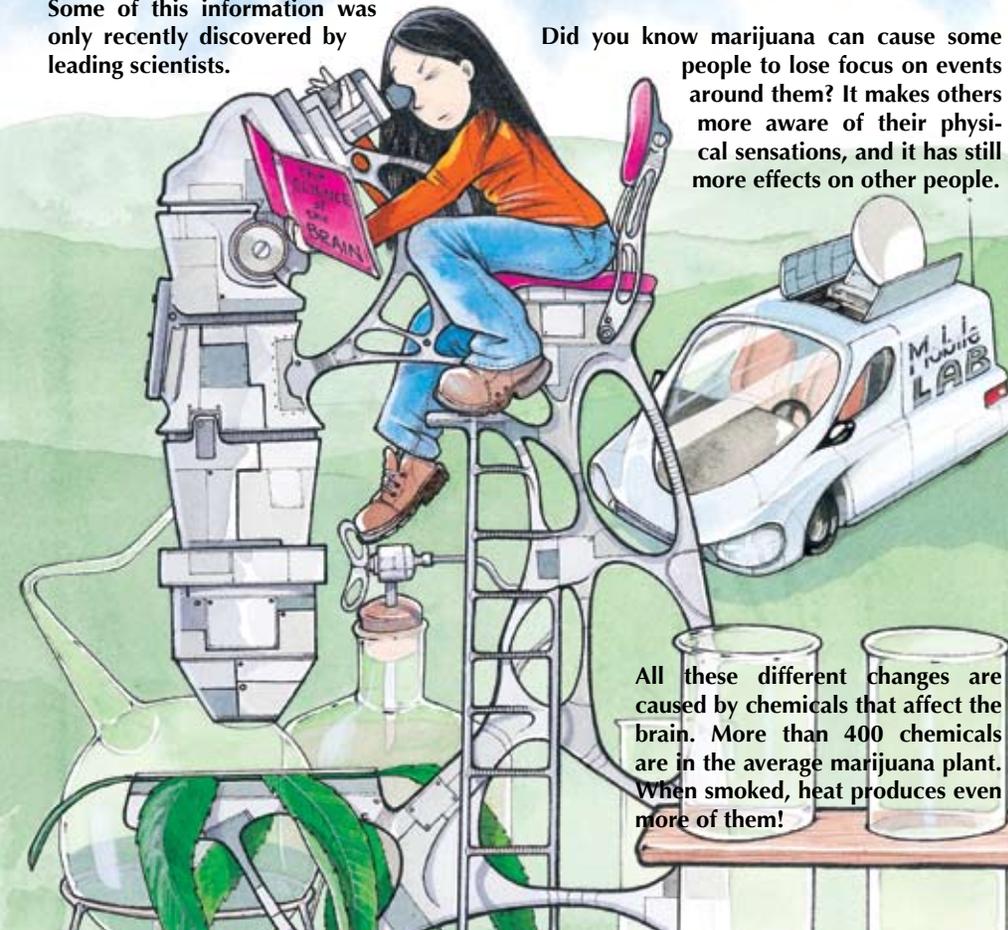


The Brain's Response to Marijuana

Hi, my name's Sara Bellum. Welcome to my magazine series exploring the brain's response to drugs. In this issue, we'll investigate the fascinating facts about marijuana. Some of this information was only recently discovered by leading scientists.

You may have heard it called pot, weed, grass, ganja or skunk, but marijuana by any other name is still a drug that affects the brain.

Did you know marijuana can cause some people to lose focus on events around them? It makes others more aware of their physical sensations, and it has still more effects on other people.



All these different changes are caused by chemicals that affect the brain. More than 400 chemicals are in the average marijuana plant. When smoked, heat produces even more of them!

National Institute on Drug Abuse

