

'Everyone Will Become a Drug Addict' in D.C., Says Russian Health Official

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A man smokes marijuana.

Washington D.C. residents are doomed to a grim future of drug addiction, the Russian Health Ministry's top drugs specialist warned Thursday in a scathing commentary on the district's recent legalization of marijuana.

"When the authorities take their cue from the sinister interests of the population, what happens is everyone becomes a drug addict," Yevgeny Bryun, the ministry's chief drugs specialist, was cited as saying Thursday by Interfax news agency.

A law legalizing recreational marijuana use took effect in Washington, D.C. on Thursday. In accordance with the new law, Washington residents over 21 years of age will be allowed to smoke marijuana in their own homes, but not in public places.

Bryun expressed hope that Russia would not follow suit.

"The path from marijuana use does not always lead to hard drugs in 100% of cases, but there is a pattern. The use of marijuana is a gateway to more serious drug addiction, and people who have genetic and inherent risk factors will definitely become drug addicts," Bryun was cited as saying.

Earlier, Viktor Ivanov, the head of the Federal Drug Control Service, told Interfax that drugs would never be made legal in Russia.

Russia's own handling of drug addiction has frequently been criticized as overly harsh, with activists arguing that Russia's ban on methadone and other opioid substitutes only fuels an HIV epidemic and neglects the needs of recovering addicts.

In late January, United Nations' AIDS envoy Michel Kazatchkine made waves when he blamed the deaths of nearly 100 recovering drug addicts in Russia's newly acquired Crimean Peninsula on the government's drug policies.

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