

CANNABIS



WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis, also known as marijuana, generally refers to the dried flowers (Grass) or resin (Hash) of the female Marijuana plant (Cannabis Sativa/Indica). It comes in the form of resin, normally extracted from the flowers of the plant, the dried flowers themselves, or very rarely as cannabis oil.

Cannabis contains many chemicals, some of which are known as cannabinoids. The cannabinoid which give you the feeling of being high or stoned is called THC (tetrahydrocannabinol).

HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU?

Cannabis affects people in different ways. It depends on how you feel, how much you smoke and where and who you are with, but generally, when smoked, the effects are felt quite quickly.

They can range from feeling relaxed, happy and laid back to feeling wired and paranoid.

Other effects can include eating large amounts of biscuits, pot burns in your favourite clothes and sitting on your bum all day.

HOW IS IT USED?

Smoked

Cannabis is usually smoked in a cigarette called a 'joint', normally rolled with tobacco.

Cannabis can also be smoked in a pipe or water 'bong' (a pipe which passes smoke through water to cool and filter it). When smoked, cannabis usually affects you quite quickly.

Vaporisers:

Vaporisers are less risky – they get just hot enough to release the THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol, the bit that gets you stoned) but not the tar.

Eating:

Sometimes people will eat cannabis, mixed with other ingredients or in pre-made 'edibles'. If eaten, the effects take much longer to be felt but can build up and get stronger over a longer period of time. It is much harder for someone to control the dose of the drug when cannabis is eaten.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Health:

Cannabis is usually smoked with tobacco which is known to cause serious health problems including cancer and heart disease. The nicotine in tobacco is very addictive and damaging to your health. Your lungs were not meant to take in hot, noxious gases, so smoking cannabis, even on its own, is not good for your lungs.

Mental Health:

If you feel down, cannabis will probably make you feel worse. You may feel sick, confused and worried – but these feelings will normally wear off as the cannabis does. Some research suggests that if you have an underlying mental health problem or one that you may not know about, using cannabis may bring it on.

Be aware of how you feel when you smoke cannabis. If you start to feel anxious, paranoid or stressed out you should think about cutting down or stopping altogether.

Motivation:

When you use cannabis, you may keep forgetting what you're doing and find it hard to concentrate. You might find you can't work or study properly. You may still feel spaced out the next day.

Accidents:

Cannabis can make you clumsy and slow to react. Don't smoke cannabis if you are going to drive or operate machinery.

Dependency:

Using cannabis can become a habit. Regular users may find it hard to stop. If you smoke cannabis with tobacco you may find it even more difficult to give up cigarettes.

HOW TO REDUCE THE RISKS

The only risk-free drug use is no drug use, but if you are using, or considering using cannabis, the advice below will help minimise the risks to your health.

Don't mix it with tobacco.

Tobacco is addictive and has been proven to cause cancer and heart disease.

Don't hold the cannabis smoke in your lungs

You won't get more stoned. It just means more tar and other nasty chemicals will stick to your lungs.

Don't use a cigarette filter for a roach

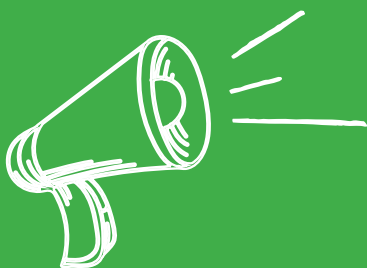
You will inhale more tar. Use plain card, loosely rolled up, for a roach – this lets the smoke flow easily.

Don't use too many papers

Three skimmers will do – or you'll breathe in too much burnt paper.

Don't use plastic bottles, rubber hoses, PVC, foil and aluminium

These give off toxic fumes when hot. Glass, steel or brass pipes are safer.



Maybe you like to get high, but not everyone does. Show some respect. Don't smoke near people who don't use cannabis – especially children and people with breathing problems.



IN CONTROL

If you or someone you are with is having a bad time while using cannabis, the information below will help you stay in control:

- If one of your friends is having a bad time sit them somewhere quiet and comfortable, away from others. Stay calm and keep them calm, take their mind off things by talking to them. Tell them the bad feelings will wear off soon.
- Cannabis lowers blood-sugar levels. You will feel better if you have something sweet to eat or drink.
- If you feel bad when stoned you should think about stopping, if only for a short time. Give your mind and your body a break.
- If you use it every day, have a couple of days off each week. Smoke fewer spliffs a day, or put a bit less in them.
- If you are trying to cut down, avoid places, people or events that remind you of cannabis.
- Don't buy extra, thinking you will save some for tomorrow – you probably won't.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

Cannabis is illegal. It is a class B drug. It's against the law to possess cannabis, sell it or give it away, grow it or let your place be used for smoking it.

The maximum penalty for possession of a Class B drug can be up to five years in prison and an unlimited fine.

The maximum penalty for supplying a Class B drug can be 14 years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

In reality, if you are caught in possession of cannabis an 'escalation' penalty system may be used.

A criminal record can be a real problem at home, college or work, and in later life.

