

FACT SHEET

Cannabis

Cannabis is the most common illegal drug that comes from a plant called “cannabis sativa” which grows all over the world. Cannabis is considered a unique drug that does not solely belong in either the hallucinogen or depressant category; it has effects of both. Some street names for cannabis are pot, weed, grass, hash, smoke or ganja. Hash and hash oil come from cannabis and tend to be much more potent than their leafy counterpart marijuana. Marijuana is green or brownish and comes from the flowers on the cannabis plant. The flowers are dried and usually rolled in a joint (like a cigarette) and then smoked. Some people smoke marijuana in pipes, bongs and others eat it. Hashish (hash) is made from the dried resin at the top of the plant. It is often brown or black and “chunky looking”. Hash oil is made from hashish. It is a sticky oil that can be brown, black, red or clear. It is often placed in bottle caps.

Cannabis products can be eaten or smoked. Cannabis has psychoactive chemicals, the main

one being “tetrahydrocannabinol” or THC for short. When you smoke cannabis, the THC goes into your lungs, then into your heart, which pumps it into your bloodstream which then takes it directly to your brain. When you smoke cannabis, it only takes a few minutes for the THC to get to your brain, whereas if you eat it, it would take a little longer because it passes through your digestive system first. Once it’s in your brain, the THC activates “receptors”, and gives you the feeling of being high. Cannabis changes the physical and chemical balance in your brain and this is what people refer to as a “high”.

The use of cannabis with alcohol is far more dangerous than the two used separately. The intoxicating effects of both drugs used at the same time increase impairment. In this case 1 + 1 does not equal 2, but more like 3 or 4.

Effects of Short-Term Use

While using Cannabis a person may experience the following:

- red eyes & lowered skin temperature
- increased heart rate and blood pressure
- drowsiness, slow speech
- slow reaction and poor coordination
- concentration and memory problems
- feeling of pleasure
- hearing, seeing and feeling things
- a strong desire for food
- time may go by quickly or slowly
- panic or paranoia
- dizziness

Effects of Long-Term Use

After heavy cannabis use, over a long period of time, a person may experience:

- short-term memory problems
- difficulty problem solving and learning

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Effects of Long-Term Use

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- breathing problems, lung damage
- frequent cough, risk of cancer
- immune system problems
- reproductive system problems
- fearfulness and anxiety
- decreased motivation, low energy

Cannabis and Dependency

Frequent and regular use of cannabis may result in the development of a tolerance; more and more of the drug is needed to get the same effect. Users can become psychologically and physically dependent. (The user thinks and his or her body feels that the drug is needed).

Sources:

- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Addiction Commission (AADAC)
- Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM)
- Health Canada (Be Drug Wise)