

# FACTS ABOUT CANNABIS

## WHAT IS CANNABIS

Also known as marijuana, grass, kif, yarndi, pot, weed, green, reefer, Mary Jane, doobie, bud, hashish, dope, ganja, joint, spliff, smoke, hemp, stick, bhang, chronic, cone, choof, mull, dabbing

Cannabis is a cannabinoid drug. It is made up of dried leaves, flowers, stems or seeds from the cannabis plant. Cannabis contains more than 80 chemicals, including Delta9 TetraHydroCannabinol (THC), which is the chemical responsible for the "high" effect. Hash, or hash oil, is made from the resin of the plant. Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug in Australia.

## EFFECTS OF CANNABIS

### How it is used

Cannabis is smoked in hand-rolled cigarettes with or without tobacco, in pipes, water pipes or bongs. Hashish is smoked or added to foods, such as cookies and brownies, or brewed as tea. Hash oil is usually added to the tip of cigarettes and smoked.

Effects depend on the person (age, weight, size, health and tolerance), the environment (altitude), as well as the strength, the amount used, and if it is used with other drugs, including alcohol. When smoked, effects are felt quickly. When eaten, it takes between 30 minutes to one hour to feel effects.

Short-term effects, desired and undesired, may include...

- relaxed and happy
- more talkative and social, laugh more
- loss of inhibition, doing and saying things you normally wouldn't
- increased hunger and food cravings
- increased heart rate and blood pressure
- drowsiness and bloodshot eyes
- change in senses, such as how you perceive colours, time and sounds
- poor concentration and co-ordination
- anxiety, panic, suspicion and paranoia.

Long-term effects may include...

- impaired learning, memory and problem-solving skills
- lung issues, such as daily cough and phlegm, asthma, bronchitis
- higher risk of heart attack
- nausea and vomiting
- cannabis dependence
- psychosis – delusions and hallucinations. People with symptoms or a family history of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder have a higher risk of cannabis-induced psychosis.

## HOW LONG DOES CANNABIS STAY IN YOUR SYSTEM?

Depends on use and person. When smoked, effects may last one to 4 hours. When eaten, effects may last 6 hours or longer. Generally, cannabis can be detected in saliva up to 12 hours (3 days if a frequent user), urine 3 days (one month or longer if a frequent user), blood up to 36 hours and in hair up to three months.

## TIPS FOR REDUCING RISK

There is no safe way to use cannabis. There will always be a health risk. The only way to be safe is not to use. If you choose to use, the following will help reduce risk:

**Before:** take a friend, plan how to get home (to avoid driving while under the influence), chop only the amount you wish to smoke and use a joint rather than a bong. If using a bong – choose glass, stainless steel or brass. Wooden or plastic bongs with rubber hoses can give off noxious fumes. Make sure the bong is clean and change the water.

**During:** go slow, smoke a small amount first to see effects before having a bit more, know and keep to your limits. If eating cannabis – wait one hour to see effects (it is easy to eat too much).

Avoid: mixing cannabis with other drugs, including tobacco or alcohol, using too much or too often, bong sharing, using synthetic cannabinoids or holding inhalations which is more harmful to lungs. While using don't be alone or do risky activities or be responsible for the care of others.

## IS CANNABIS USE BECOMING A PROBLEM?

- I struggle to limit or reduce the amount of cannabis I'm using
- I spend a lot of time using cannabis or affected by it
- I often feel strong urges to use cannabis
- I'm unable to perform tasks at work, school or home due to cannabis use
- I have developed a tolerance to cannabis, so I need to have more to feel effects
- I have withdrawal symptoms – irritability, difficulty sleeping, sweats, depression, reduced appetite or stomach problems.

## TIPS FOR PROBLEMATIC CANNABIS USE

- seek support from a health professional, as well as from family and friends
- avoid people, places, objects, feelings or situations associated with using cannabis
- start doing activities you enjoy that don't involve using cannabis
- look after yourself – get enough sleep, follow a healthy diet, adopt a balanced lifestyle
- set some personal goals.

## CANNABIS AND THE LAW

Cannabis use, possession, production and supply are illegal across most states of Australia, with varying penalties from state to state. The only exception is the ACT, which has decriminalised cannabis, removing penalties for adults who possess or use small amounts.

### FOR SUPPORT – CALL DRUG ARM

CALL DRUG ARM CENTRAL INTAKE ON 07 3620 8880 DURING BUSINESS HOURS TO ACCESS FREE SUPPORT OR EMAIL [INTAKE@DRUGARM.COM.AU](mailto:INTAKE@DRUGARM.COM.AU). FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, CALL 1300 656 800 OR EMAIL [INFO@DRUGARM.COM.AU](mailto:INFO@DRUGARM.COM.AU).

### FOR 24/7 SUPPORT CALL:

ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE: 1800 177 833 (QLD) AND 1800 250 015 (NATIONAL).