

# Cannabis Smoking

Or in other words... bhang, black, blast, blow, blunts, Bob Hope, bush, dope, draw, ganja, grass, hash, hashish, hemp, herb, marijuana, pot, puff, resin, sensi, sinsemilla, skunk, smoke, solids, slids, soap, spliff, wacky backy, weed, zero.

## Did you know?... smoking a cannabis joint is as harmful as 5 cigarettes?

In the main this is an easily obtainable, relatively cheap drug. Users can smoke it, often with tobacco, put it in cooking, such as cakes, or smoke it through a “water bong”. A bong is usually made from glass but can be as basic as a plastic drinks bottle and cannabis is then drawn through the water.

The main effects are:

| <i>Positive</i>                                      | <i>Negative</i>  |
|--|--|
| Euphoria - “high”                                    | Anxiety /paranoia  |
| Relaxes - “de-stress”                                | Reacts badly with alcohol                                      |
| Removal from, or blocking off, reality               | Hallucinations/psychotic episodes                              |
| Sleep inducement                                     | Higher risk of COPD – due to deeper inhalation                 |
| Pain relief  | Panic attacks  |
| Increased appetite (blood sugar levels drop)         | Insular  |
| Sociability/confidence – helps with low self-esteem? | Rapid increased heartbeat and decreased blood pressure.        |
| Some medicinal use                                   | Effect on cognitive and psychomotor functioning – e.g. driving |
|  | Weaken short term memory                                       |
|  | Nausea   |

## Chemicals in cannabis

There are about 4000 chemicals in smoked cannabis, similar to cigarettes. Nicotine hits the brain receptors in approximately 7 seconds but cannabis is absorbed through the lungs and into the blood stream. Because cannabis is fat soluble it is rapidly taken up by the body tissues and may remain stored in body fat for a long time, making withdrawal longer and detection easier up to 6 weeks after use but even longer in hair samples.

## Legalities

Is now a Class B drug, i.e. it is still illegal!

Police can arrest you and you can get a sentence of up to 5 years if caught smoking cannabis in public.

## Background

Cannabis is a plant that grows wild in many countries and has been used for thousands of years to make cloth, paper and rope (hemp). First mention of its use is in Chinese Medicine in 28BC! The dried heads and flowers of the male or female plants are used to make cannabis; the resin found in the flowering tops of the female plant is the strongest

There are over 60 compounds in cannabis known as cannabinoids that are not found in any other plant, 6 of these are psychoactive, the key one being Delta 9 THC (Delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol). Some additives in low-grade hash include turpentine, boot polish, pine resin, toluene, benzene, glues and dyes. There are many different varieties and differing strengths so you don't know what strength you are buying and different plants give different effects: dopey, trippy or speedy.

## Can cannabis cause mental health problems?

Cannabis may be related to psychosis because the cannabinoid receptors are closely related to dopamine receptors. Drugs that increase the brains dopamine levels increase the risk of a psychotic attack. Long-term use may reduce ability to feel/see pleasure in normal everyday life and could last for some time.

## And compared to tobacco smokers...

Smokers of cannabis have 5 times more concentration carbon monoxide in their blood, inhale 3 times more tar and are 4.2 times more likely to have a heart attack happen within an hour of smoking cannabis. There is no evidence that cannabis alone causes cancer but cannabis smoke is carcinogenic and of course if smoked with tobacco it will cause cancer.

In young people it links to bullous lung disease, i.e. inflammatory lung changes, chronic cough and chest infections.

For help to reduce or stop cannabis use contact:

### **Cranstoun Drug Services**

North Warwickshire 02476 327604

Rugby 01788 569582

South Warwickshire 01926 885176

### **Warwickshire Substance Misuse Service**

Northern CDT 02476 641100

Rugby CDT 01788 555100

Leamington CDT 01926 885000

Stratford CDT 01789 261800

### **Warwickshire Young Persons Substance Misuse Service**

0800 088 7248