
What are the long-term effects of marijuana use?

Respiratory System: Marijuana can be especially harmful to the lungs because users inhale the unfiltered smoke deeply and hold it in their lungs as long as possible. Marijuana smoke can cause the same breathing problems that tobacco users experience, including bronchitis and emphysema.

Cancer: Marijuana smoke contains more cancer-causing agents than is found in tobacco smoke. In fact, studies show that someone who smokes five joints per week may be taking in as many cancer-causing chemicals as someone who smokes a full pack of cigarettes every day.

Reproductive System: Heavy use of marijuana can affect male and female hormones, diminish or extinguish sexual pleasure, and cause temporary loss in fertility. Among other symptoms, women may have irregular menstrual cycles, and young men may experience the delayed onset of puberty.

Immune System: Animal studies have found that THC can damage the cells and tissues that help guard against diseases.



Mission Statement

The Pat Walker Health Center, University Health Services provides professional and comprehensive medical care, mental health care, health education, and health promotion for a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. We, the University Health Services Staff of the Pat Walker Health Center, have a commitment to physical, mental, spiritual, social, and emotional health, the highest standards of quality, and appreciation of the value of each individual. Through these endeavors we support the educational mission of the University of Arkansas and the growth of each individual.

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Marijuana

Just the Facts



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What is marijuana?

Marijuana is a green, brown, or gray mixture of dried, shredded flowers and leaves of the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa*). There are over 200 slang terms for marijuana, including pot, weed, grass, hay, herb, cannabis, dobie, ganja green, indica, chronic, mary jane, reefer, dope, sinsemilla, etc.

Although all parts of the plant are mind-altering, the main ingredient in marijuana is THC. The amount of THC in the marijuana determines how strong its effects will be on the user. The strength of today's marijuana is much greater than the marijuana used in the early 1970's - increasing the possibilities of health problems for today's users.

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What is hash and sinsemilla?

Hashish (or hash), hash oil, and sinsemilla are stronger forms of marijuana. Hashish is made by taking the resin from the leaves and flowers of the marijuana plant and pressing it into cakes or slabs. Hash may contain five to ten times as much THC as other forms of marijuana.

How is marijuana used?

Marijuana is usually smoked as a cigarette, called a joint, or in a pipe or bong. Recently, it has appeared in hollowed-out cigars called blunts or swishes which are more dangerous because they contain the equivalent of three to four joints. Marijuana may also be baked into brownies and consumed.

Are other drugs used with marijuana?

Yes. In some instances, marijuana joints have been dipped in PCP and embracing fluid to enhance marijuana's effects. Joints laced with cocaine are called "Primo." The use of multiple drugs can intensify marijuana's initial effects and increase the chances of adverse reactions.

Is it possible to become addicted?

Yes. Long-term regular users of marijuana may become dependent or addicted. Problem users lose interest in daily activities and report loss of energy and boredom. They may have a hard time limiting their use, may build a tolerance to the drug to get the same effect, and may develop problems with their jobs and personal relationships.

What are the immediate effects of smoking marijuana?

Some immediate physical effects of marijuana, along with intoxication, include red, bloodshot eyes, confusion and anxiety, loss of coordination, increased appetite, hallucinations, and a dry mouth and throat. Someone high on marijuana may seem giggly or silly for no reason and have trouble walking. Studies on marijuana's mental effects show that the drug can impair or reduce short-term memory, alter sense of time, and reduce ability to do things, which require concentration, swift reactions, and coordination.

Are there short-term adverse effects to using marijuana?

Yes. A common adverse reaction to marijuana is the "acute panic anxiety reaction." Users describe this reaction as an extreme fear of losing control, which causes panic. The symptoms usually disappear in a few hours. The risk of other adverse reactions is even greater when other drugs and alcohol are mixed with marijuana.

Does marijuana affect driving ability?

Research shows that driving skills are impaired for at least four to six hours after smoking a single joint, long after the high is gone. Thinking and reflexes are slowed, making it hard for drivers to respond to sudden, unexpected events. Also, a driver's ability to stay in their lane through curves, brake quickly, and maintain speed and the proper distance between cars is affected. If a person drinks alcohol, along with using marijuana, the risk of an accident greatly increases.

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How long does marijuana stay in the user's body?

THC is strongly absorbed by fatty tissues in various organs and disrupts nerve cells in the part of the brain where memories are formed. Generally, traces of THC can be detected weeks after they have stopped using marijuana.

