

# Cannabis



Cannabis (also known as pot, weed, reefer, herb, ganja, hash oil, skunk, or grass) is the most commonly used illegal drug in Canada. It comes from the plant, *Cannabis sativa*, which produces cannabis herb (or marijuana) and cannabis resin (or hashish). Both marijuana and hashish are usually smoked in a joint, a pipe or a bong but are sometimes eaten (hash brownies or space cakes) or brewed as a tea.

## Short-Term Effects

Cannabis affects everyone differently. After using cannabis, you may experience effects like red eyes, random and uncontrollable laughter, sleepiness, problems with memory and increased hunger (also known as the *munchies*). You may also become paranoid and nervous. Cannabis can slow down your reaction time and may affect your attention span, short-term memory and your ability to concentrate. It can also increase your heart rate and decrease your blood pressure.

## Long-Term Effects

Repeated use of cannabis may cause you to see, hear and feel things that are not actually there. If you regularly smoke cannabis you may experience problems with your immune system and your respiratory system which includes your lungs and airways. Long-term effects may include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath after exercise, chest tightness, and severe and reoccurring bronchitis. Chronic cannabis use, or use at least once a week over a period of months or years, can lead to damage in memory, attention, learning and problem solving. Heavy and regular use can also increase the risk of depression and anxiety.

### **How does it work?**

When you smoke cannabis, the drug passes through your lungs, heart, bloodstream and brain. The drug turns on receptors in your brain which gives you the feeling of being high. When you eat

cannabis, the drug goes through your digestive system and bloodstream, and can take longer for you to feel its effects.

## Cannabis and Dependency

Research suggests that with cannabis use, you could become psychologically dependent (you feel you need it) or physically dependent (your body needs it) on the drug. A person's risk of becoming dependent on cannabis increases if they use it daily.

### **Did you know...**

- › *Driving after using cannabis, especially when used with alcohol, greatly increases your chances of being in a collision.*
- › *Use of cannabis during pregnancy can lead to learning problems among children. Heavy use of cannabis during pregnancy can also lead to children having difficulty sitting still, paying attention and making good decisions.*
- › *People that start using cannabis at a young age when the brain is still developing may be more likely to experience the long-term effects of cannabis.*
- › *Smoking cannabis may be equally or even more harmful to your lungs, airways and immune system than smoking tobacco.*

## Who can you contact if you need help regarding drug use?

Contact your local Addictions/Mental Health Services office, doctor or other health care provider if you need more information. To locate Addictions/Mental Health Services near you here are some options:

- visit [healthysask.ca](http://healthysask.ca);
- check the green pages of your phone book for your local health region's services;
- visit HealthLine Online at [healthlineonline.ca](http://healthlineonline.ca); or
- contact HealthLine at 811 and ask to speak to an Addictions or Mental Health Counsellor.



**NOTE:** This material is for information only and should not replace advice from an Addictions or Mental Health Counsellor, doctor or other health care provider.