

Health Effects Of Marijuana

What are the immediate effects of using marijuana?

The effects of marijuana use can be different for everyone. Common immediate effects of marijuana may include :¹

- ▶ Marijuana can make your heart beat faster after use.
- ▶ The chemical in marijuana that makes you feel high, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), can cause temporary psychotic symptoms.
- ▶ Being high can make some activities more dangerous. For occasional users, a single serving (5mg THC) of marijuana is enough to impact your ability to drive or do other activities safely.

Marijuana can vary in its potency, or strength, depending on the plant and extraction process.



Interactions with other substances

- ▶ Using alcohol and marijuana at the same time is more dangerous than using either alone and increases the risk of a car crash.
- ▶ Use caution when taking medication and marijuana at the same time. There may be drug interactions between marijuana and your medication.

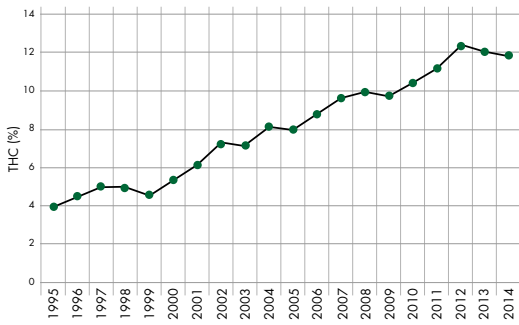
Talk to your healthcare provider about marijuana use if you are taking prescription medications.



Edibles

- ▶ Since the body slowly digests edibles like regular food, marijuana – infused products can take up to 4 hours to take full effect.
- ▶ Multiple servings can be in a package. All edible retail marijuana products must have clear single servings of 5 mg THC, with no more than 50 mg THC per retail unit.
- ▶ Use caution when consuming any marijuana. Read package labels carefully to figure out serving size. Start with one serving, then wait until you feel the effect before deciding to use more.
- ▶ Marijuana products can be confused for regular food or candy. Be sure to keep all marijuana products in child-resistant packaging, clearly labeled and stored safely.





Marijuana dabbing

Dabbing is when THC extract (otherwise called hash oil, dabs, shatter or wax) is heated into a vapor that is inhaled by the user. These extracts can contain up to 99 percent THC. The effects peak seconds to minutes after inhalation and can cause significant impairment. Users who consume this highly concentrated form of THC, particularly teens, can experience an unpredictable high with negative physical and emotional reactions.

What is known about long-term health effects of marijuana?

Is marijuana addictive?

Marijuana use may lead to addiction. This means that a person can't control or stop marijuana use even though it interferes with daily life. Youth who begin using marijuana regularly are more likely to become addicted than those who wait until adulthood to use.

What are the respiratory effects?

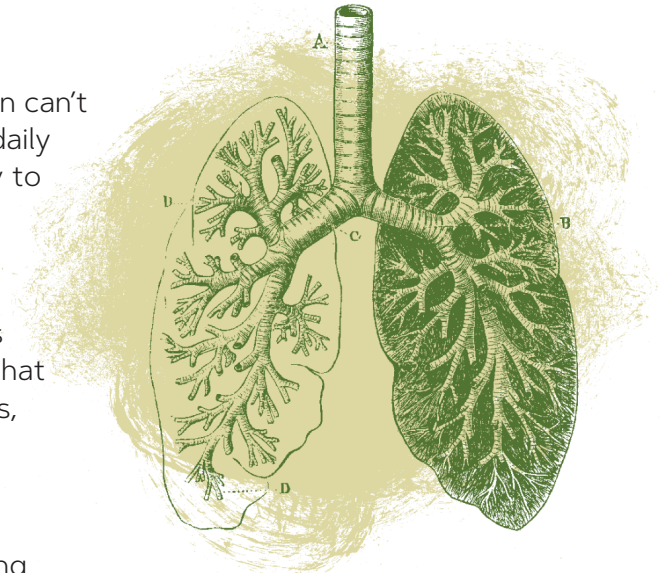
Marijuana smoke irritates the lungs. Heavy marijuana smokers (daily or near daily) have many of the same health problems that tobacco smokers have. These include a daily cough, bronchitis, mucus and wheezing.

Does smoking marijuana cause lung cancer?

There is conflicting research about smoking marijuana and lung cancer. Some of the cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco smoke are also in marijuana smoke. Heavy marijuana smoking is strongly associated with tissue damage in the airways of your lungs. More research is needed to determine if this tissue damage increases the likelihood of developing lung cancer.

Is marijuana effective in treating pain?

There is conflicting research on whether or not marijuana use is associated with a decrease in opioid use by chronic pain patients.¹ Talk to your doctor about pain management options as there are many effective non-opioid options.



Brain and mental health effects

Daily or near daily using of marijuana can have a negative effect on your memory. This damage can last a week or more after the last time you used.

In adults, regular marijuana use may be associated with depression. It may be associated with other mental health problems such as anxiety and psychosis. THC, especially in high doses, may cause temporary psychotic symptoms.

Unlike adults, the teen brain is actively developing and often will not be fully developed until the mid 20s. Marijuana use during this period may harm the developing teen brain.





Marijuana during pregnancy

There is no known safe amount of marijuana to use while pregnant. That's because no matter how it's used (smoked, eaten etc.), THC gets passed to your baby and may have a long-term impact on your child's ability to learn.²

Marijuana while breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the optimal feeding choice for most infants. However, any THC consumed enters your breast milk and can be passed to your baby. Talk to your healthcare provider about how to reduce the amount of marijuana consumed during breastfeeding.³

Children and accidental marijuana ingestion

- ▶ Child resistant packaging can help stop accidental poisoning. Poison Control Help Line 1-800-222-1222
- ▶ Marijuana products purchased from retail marijuana stores are required by law to have children-resistant packaging. Keep marijuana in this package and store it in a locked area where children cannot see or reach.

Use among adolescents and youth adults

- ▶ Concerns related to adolescent health include youth access and initiation, youth and adult marijuana impaired driving, and health problems associated with heavy marijuana use. Although it is illegal for anyone under 21 years to possess, use, or distribute marijuana, youth caught having marijuana may be referred to the juvenile justice system, which can carry stiff penalties.
- ▶ Youth who start using marijuana, alcohol, or other drugs may be more likely to continue using later in life.



Resources:

For more information on marijuana in Alaska, including laws, health effects and resources for youth prevention, visit marijuana.dhss.alaska.gov.

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References:

1. Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado: 2016. <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/marijuana-health-report/>
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