

Marijuana

What is it?

Marijuana is a green, brown, or gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers of an Indian hemp plant, *Cannabis sativa*.

More common names for marijuana are: pot, grass, herb, weed, Mary Jane, reefer, skunk, boom, gangster, kif, chronic, and ganja.

Marijuana is usually smoked as a cigarette in a joint or nail, smoked in a pipe or a bong, brewed as tea, or mixed with food. The major psychoactive chemical in marijuana is THC or delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol. THC concentration will differ among plant varieties but the average concentration in the smokeable parts of the plant is 4-6%.

Sinsemilla, a very strong form of marijuana obtained from unpollinated female hemp plants, is a cultivated form of marijuana that may have THC potency of 10-14%.

Hashish, also known as “hash” is processed resin from marijuana plants pressed into cakes or slabs and smoked typically in a pipe. The most refined form of marijuana is hash oil, reported to contain 50% THC.

There are over 400 other chemicals within the plant that may cause dangerous side effects to the mind and body.

Why do people smoke marijuana?

Many young people smoke marijuana because they see their brothers, sisters, friends or even older family members using it. Some use marijuana because of peer pressure. While others are greatly influenced by the image that the media and music industry portray of marijuana smokers. Some people may feel they need marijuana and or other drugs to help them escape or cope with problems at home, school, or with friends.

Indicators of a marijuana smoker

When someone is smoking marijuana, he or she might:

- Seem dizzy and have trouble walking
- Have red, bloodshot eyes
- Experience difficulty remembering things that just happened.

What happens when you smoke marijuana?

The effects of consuming marijuana can vary depending on the dosage and an individual’s body type.

The most consistently reported effects include:

- Increased heart rate with small moderate doses, intensifies with greater intake
- Impairment of speech, thinking, memory of recent events, physical coordination, balance and stability
- Increased blood pressure, reddening of the eyes, dryness of the mouth and throat, and elevated body temperature
- Increased risk for chronic pulmonary disorders, cancer in lung/mouth and emphysema
- Sleepiness and increased hunger
- Increased anxiety, restlessness.
- Impaired or reduced short term memory
- Increased infertility in men and women
- Decreased social inhibitions and exposure to risky situations

What are the side effects of marijuana?

Findings show that regular use of marijuana and THC may lead to various kinds of cancer and problems with the respiratory and immune systems.

Effects on the brain. Marijuana damages areas of the brain responsible for:

*Memory
Control
Attention
Learning*

Effects on Driving. Serious harmful effects on the skills required to drive safely include:

*Obscured alertness to speed, traffic lights, other cars and pedestrians
Reduced ability in judgment and motor coordination
Difficult to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road*

Long Term Effects.

*Not surprisingly, people who smoke marijuana have some of the same breathing problems as those who smoke tobacco - they are more susceptible to chest colds, coughs, and bronchitis than people who do not smoke. Someone who smokes marijuana may be **taking in as many cancer-causing chemicals as someone who smokes cigarettes everyday.***

*THC can damage the cells and tissues in the body that help protect against disease. When the **immune cells are weakened**, you are more likely to get sick.*

*Long-term marijuana use **can lead to addiction**. It is estimated that 9 percent of people who use marijuana will become dependent on it.*

*Early marijuana use may **increase your risk of developing psychosis** if you have a genetic vulnerability to the disease.*

Is marijuana sometimes used as medicine?

Under the U.S. law since 1970, marijuana has been a scheduled I controlled substance. This means that the drug, at least in its smoked form, has no commonly accepted medical use. THC is an FDA-approved medication. It was shown in clinical trials to have therapeutic benefit for relieving nausea associated with cancer chemotherapy and stimulating appetite in patients with wasting syndrome (severe weight loss) that often accompanies AIDS.

Recent, research has demonstrated that smoked marijuana may be a promising treatment for select pain syndromes and for painful muscle spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis.

How to quit using marijuana?

Researchers are testing different ways to help marijuana users abstain from drug use. There are currently no medications for treating marijuana addiction. Treatment programs focus on counseling and group support systems. There are also a number of programs designed especially to help teenagers who are abusers. Health care providers can be a good source for information and help in dealing with marijuana problems.

What are the legal consequences?

Possession of marijuana is an infraction under California Health and Safety Code 11357. Possession of one ounce (28.5 grams) or less is punishable by a maximum \$100 fine. Jail time is possible for larger amounts as well as a maximum fine of \$500. Sale, transportation or distribution of marijuana is a felony under Health and Safety Code Sections 11360. Transporting or giving away one ounce or less is a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$100 fine. Anything more may result in jail time and/or fines. Cultivation of any amount is a felony and could result in jail time according to the Health and Safety Code 11358.

For More Information:

Student Health Services 619-594-5281
Health Promotion. 619-594-4133
Visit Our Website at <http://shs.sdsu.edu>
Facebook/Twitter. AZTEHealth
SDSU Counseling & Psychological Services . 619-594-5281
Marijuana Anonymous 619-685-2808

Narcotics Anonymous 619-584-1007
The National Institute for Drug Abuse Nida.nih.gov