

Understanding cannabis

An easy read educational resource

ASCERT

HSC Public Health Agency
Project supported by the PHA

Clear
Emotional well-being & Mental health

This resources has been co-developed by ASCERT and SEHSCT Health Development, supported by the Public Health Agency through the Clear Project

Cannabis



Cannabis is a drug. It is made from the cannabis plant.

There are also some man made drugs that contain chemicals that copy cannabis.

Cannabis comes in different forms.

It can look like leaves or grass, a resin or a liquid







There are lot of other names used for cannabis.
These are some of them.

Bhang	Hash	Puff
Bud	Hashish	Resin
Dope	Herb	Sensi
Draw	Marijuana	Sinsemilla
Ganja	Pollen	Skunk
Grass	Pot	Weed

How cannabis is used



Smoking cannabis is the most common way it is taken.

It can be rolled up into what looks like a cigarette and smoked. People often call this a 'joint or a 'spliff.



It can be burned and inhaled in a pipe called a 'bong'



Cannabis can be eaten. This might be by putting it into cakes, drinks or sweets.



Some people also use vaping machines or e-cigarettes to take cannabis products.

How cannabis affects you



It can make you feel more relaxed and giggly.



You may feel sick and vomit.



It can make you feel very hungry so you eat a lot.



It can effect how you think about things. You may think about things more deeply or strongly than you normally would.



It can make you feel tired or sleepy.



Some people say they have mild hallucinations. This means they can see things that aren't really there.

Cannabis and your health

Using cannabis regularly can be bad for your health.

It can increase your blood pressure and risk of heart problems.

It can have long term effects on your mental health.



It can make you out of breath or wheezy. If you have asthma it can make that worse.

It can affect fertility in both men and women and make it harder to have children.

It increases your risk of getting some cancers.

Smoking cannabis when pregnant can harm the baby.

Cannabis and mental health



Cannabis can make you not want to do things you might normally enjoy.



Using cannabis over a long time can damage your memory so you can't remember things. It can make it harder to learn new information.



It can give you mood swings.

It can make you anxious, panicky, or even aggressive. These feelings can last for hours.



It can make you feel depressed.



It can disturb your sleep, leaving you feeling and looking tired.



Cannabis can increase your chances of developing mental illnesses like schizophrenia. This is a greater risk if there is a history of mental illness in your family.

Tips to help reduce problems from cannabis



Not everyone uses cannabis. You can just choose not to.

You don’t need to use cannabis to have fun.

Just because other people use cannabis does not mean you have to.



If you do use cannabis there are ways to reduce the risk of problems.



Remember that cannabis is a drug so there is always some risk from using it.



Decide how much and how often you plan to use and stick to it.

Don’t use it every day. Try to space out the days between when you use it.



Don't use cannabis when you are alone. Make sure there is someone there you trust and who will help you if you feel unwell.

Tips to help reduce problems from cannabis

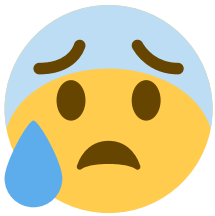


If cannabis is making you hungry don't eat more than you would normally.

This will help you not put on lots of weight.



If you are feeling the effects from the cannabis wait until they go away before taking any more.



Don't take cannabis if you are feeling sad or anxious as this will probably make you feel worse.



Do not drink alcohol when you take cannabis. Taking them together increases their effects..

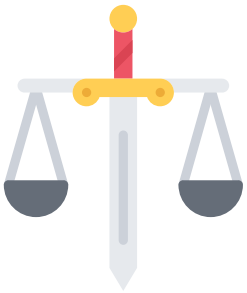


If you start to feel unwell or don’t like how you feel then do not take any more cannabis.

Cannabis and the law



Cannabis is a Class B drug. This means it is illegal and if you are caught with it you can be arrested.



If you are caught with cannabis, even a small amount, you will get in trouble with the police.

You can get a warning, a fine or go to prison.



If you are under 18 the police can tell your parents.

The maximum penalty for having cannabis is a fine up to £2500. You can also get up to five years imprisonment.



It is more serious if you are caught for selling or giving cannabis to other people, even your friends.

You can get up to 14 years in prison.



If you break the law you can get a criminal record. This can make it harder to get a job.



It can even mean you are not able to travel to some other countries.

Cannabis addiction



If you use cannabis a lot you can become addicted to it.

This means you find it hard to stop taking it even though you know its causing you problems.

If you smoke cannabis mixed with tobacco you can also become addicted to nicotine.

People addicted to cannabis can feel bad or sick when they are not using it.

If you stop using cannabis but have the signs below, you might need help to stop.

Moody or irritable

Anxiety

Headaches



Nausea

Diarrhorea

Find it hard to eat

Find it hard to sleep

There other signs that you may have a cannabis addiction.



If you have strong cravings to use cannabis

If you cant limit how much cannabis you use

If you need to keep taking more to get the same effect

Getting help with cannabis problems



You may want to use cannabis less or stop completely but cant do it without help.



You should not feel embarrassed or frightened about asking for help.

It is ok to ask for help. There are people whose job it is to help with cannabis problems.

If you want help you can ask your doctor and they can organise it.



There are also community based services for alcohol and drug use.

You can call ASCERT on 0800 2545 123

SCAN ME

You can also scan this QR code or visit www.drugsandalcoholni.info for details of all services across Northern Ireland.