

MARIJUANA (Cannabis)

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Marijuana?

Marijuana is a green, brown, or gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers of the hemp plant. Street names include grass, pot, weed, ganja, herb, widow, hash, Mary Jane, reefer, and skunk. There are at least 200 different slang words for various kinds of marijuana across the country.

What does it look like?

Marijuana can be found in several forms. It can be loose, smoked in pipes or bongs. It can be hand-rolled into marijuana cigarettes (nails or joints) or cigars (blunts). Marijuana cigarettes or cigars often contain other drugs as well, such as crack cocaine or PCP. Hashish is a more concentrated, resinous form and hash oil is a sticky black liquid.

How is it used?

It is smoked, eaten, or brewed as a tea.

What are the short-term effects of using marijuana?

- sleepiness
- difficulty keeping track of time, impaired or reduced short term memory, distorted perception
- reduced ability to perform tasks requiring concentration and coordination, such as driving a car
- increased heart rate and risk of heart attack
- bloodshot eyes
- dry mouth and throat
- decreased social inhibitions
- paranoia, hallucinations, and rarely psychosis

What are the long-term effects of using marijuana?

- enhanced cancer risk, increased risk of chronic pulmonary infections and disorders
- decreases in testosterone levels for men; also lower sperm counts and decreased fertility
- increase in testosterone levels for women; also increased risk of infertility
- diminished or extinguished sexual pleasure
- psychological dependence requiring more of the drug to get the same effect
- short-term memory loss
- depression, anxiety, and personality disturbances

How long does marijuana stay in the body after it is smoked?

Lab tests have shown traces of THC in the body (lungs and reproductive organs) for up to a month after marijuana was smoked. Because it is stored in fatty tissues, marijuana effects may persist for days or weeks with regular use.

Can marijuana affect pregnancy?

Using marijuana during pregnancy creates risks for the unborn child. It reduces oxygen supply to the fetus. It can also cause miscarriage, low birth weight, and neurological problems in the baby.

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