

10 Questions About Cannabis Use And Teens

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1 WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis is a drug that can be produced from plants. The plant contains many chemicals, including two main active ingredients:

THC affects the brain and produces the high. Over the years, levels of THC in cannabis have risen significantly which can lead to harmful effects.

CBD is currently being studied to determine possible medical benefits.

Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals that are sprayed onto dried plant material. Synthetic cannabinoids are more dangerous than cannabis.

There is no "safe" amount of cannabis. Effects vary depending on type, amount, potency and duration of use. Past products were usually low potency (less than 5% THC). Today's products are more dangerous (30-90% THC).

To date there is insufficient quality evidence to support using cannabis to treat any mental or substance use disorder. With both recreational and "medical" use there is no standardized guide for determining what constitutes "safe use."



2 WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Cannabis: like tea or dried leaves; usually green or brown.

Hashish: made from the plant resin; solid or paste; usually brown or black.

A concentrate (aka oil/wax/dabs/shatter): made from the plant; oily, waxy or pasty; usually yellow or brown.

3 WHAT IS IT CALLED?

Pot, weed, chronic, bud, herb, kush, joint, loud, mary jane, mj, blunt, dab, dope, ganja, grass, hash, reefer, skunk, smoke, trees, wax.

Synthetic cannabinoids can be called: spice, K2, Cloud 9, mojo.



4 HOW IS IT USED?

Inhaled: Rolled into a joint (cigarette) or blunt (cigar) and smoked; through a bong (water pipe); or in a vaporizer (vape). Effects are immediate and last for hours.

Eaten: Usually added to cookies, muffins, lollipops, gummy candy and brownies (aka edibles). Cannabis tea is also an edible. Effects are delayed by hours and can last up to 12 hours. This can result in teens eating too much and overdosing or experiencing adverse effects.

Symptoms of an overdose or "greening out" include: vomiting, psychosis and panic.

5 WHO USES CANNABIS AND WHY?

4% of Canadian students report using cannabis daily or almost daily. After alcohol, cannabis is the most common drug used by Canadian teens. Youth may use cannabis to:

- get high
- try something new
- have fun and relax
- fit in/be social
- escape from routine
- cope or focus

Using cannabis to cope is not a healthy strategy. Advise and support students to use other techniques including: music, reading, sports, hobbies, volunteering or hanging out with friends.

6 WHAT ABOUT THE TEEN BRAIN?

The adolescent years are a crucial period for brain growth and development. Regular cannabis use can have a negative impact on how a teenager's brain grows and develops.

7 WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS & SIGNS OF CANNABIS USE?

Misinformation about cannabis is common. A recent national survey reports that about 70% of grade 12 students did not think regular cannabis use was harmful. This is in contrast to well understood harm potential.

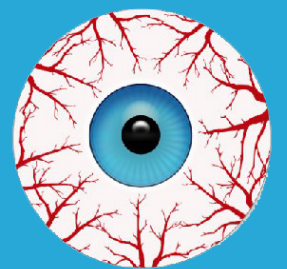
Short-term effects:	Long-term effects:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling relaxed, happy, high • more sociable • heightened & distorted perceptions • decreased motor coordination • impaired judgement & problem solving • impaired memory & learning capability • increased heart rate & body tremors • occasional anxiety or panic* • occasional psychotic symptoms* • occasional nausea & vomiting* <p>*tend to occur with exposure to high doses or overdose.</p> <p><i>Note: Using cannabis together with other drugs/alcohol can increase negative effects or produce unexpected effects.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impaired cognitive function (attention, memory & problem solving) • lack of motivation • school drop-out/poor academic achievement • chronic bronchitis • increased risk for Anxiety Disorders, Mood Disorders, Psychotic Disorders & Cannabis Use Disorder (addiction) <p>Negative long-term effects are related to regularity of use, age of onset of regular use (before 16) and using more high potency THC products.</p> <p>The greater the dose & duration of cannabis use, the greater the negative impacts. Stopping regular & heavy cannabis use may not fully restore cognitive impairments.</p>

Effects on driving:

- It is dangerous for a person to drive if they've used cannabis (cannabis doubles the risk of a fatal crash)
- There's no clear time limit to when negative impacts on driving performance decrease or stop
- Tell the student they shouldn't get into a car driven by someone who's used cannabis
- Driving while intoxicated (regardless of the drug) is illegal

While it can be difficult to know if a student is using cannabis, some possible signs include:

- more withdrawn/secretive
- red eyes, cannabis scent on person
- decrease in activities they used to enjoy
- friend group using cannabis increases probability they will
- periodically more gregarious/sociable
- decline in academic performance
- nausea, vomiting, anxiety symptoms, panic, paranoia



Cannabis can be addictive. Regular cannabis use can lead to Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD). About 12% of teens who start regular use of cannabis early will develop CUD. Treatment often requires specialty youth mental health/substance abuse interventions. Motivational interviewing/ motivational enhancement therapy, contingency monitoring and positive reinforcement for not using may be useful interventions.

8 WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY? (SJSS)

With any emergency situation it is necessary to follow school policies and procedures regarding dealing with and reporting the incident. If a student has "greened out" follow these steps:

- S** bring them to a **safe** place
- J** if they aren't vomiting, give them lots of fruit **juice**
- S** if they've passed out, lie them on their **side** and call 911
- S** if they're panicky or paranoid, stay with them to provide reassurance and **support**



If you're uncomfortable with what's happening, or suspect synthetic cannabinoid use, call 911

9 HOW DO I TALK ABOUT CANNABIS USE?

It is important to get the facts about cannabis use. There is a lot of misinformation about cannabis out there. Get informed so that you can TALK SMART.

School based clinicians are role models for students. When speaking with students about cannabis it is important for clinicians to: be open but not permissive; listen actively and respectfully; provide good evidence-based information; help students choose healthy life options.



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HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

Visit teenmentalhealth.org/cannabis to learn more about cannabis, TALK SMART and be helpful to your student. This site contains a wealth of information that your student might also find helpful. Giving them the link may start a conversation about cannabis while helping them become informed.