

CANNABIS

**INFORMATION GUIDE ON USE,
EFFECTS, SAFETY AND HELP**

V1.0 9/20



INTRODUCTION

Cannabis is the most commonly used controlled drug in the UK. It is a plant that contains hundreds of different compounds called cannabinoids. The main psychoactive cannabinoid is called THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). Other cannabinoids in the cannabis plant include CBD (cannabidiol), CBG (cannabigerol) and CBN (cannabinol). Plants are grown to contain different cannabinoid concentrations and can therefore produce different effects.

Cannabis plants have been a part of human history for thousands of years. The plant material can be used for rope and fibres in addition to being used for medicinal, psychoactive and religious purposes.

Laws controlling the use of cannabis emerged as early as the 14th century. The way that cannabis is legally controlled varies around the world. Some countries enforce strict laws that prohibit the minor possession of cannabis, some provide cannabis for medicinal use, and others offer cannabis for sale to the public to use recreationally, in a similar way to the sale of alcohol.

All drug use has risks. This booklet is for information only and does not constitute or replace medical advice. If you have medical concerns about your drug use, please speak to a medical professional.

GETTING HIGH?

Before taking any drug...

- Spend at least two hours researching the drug you are planning to take. These sites contain more information about the risks and effects of different drugs:

[crew.scot](https://www.crew.scot)

[drugsand.me](https://www.drugsand.me)

[psychonautwiki.org](https://www.psychonautwiki.org)

[erowid.org](https://www.erowid.org)

[tripsit.me](https://www.tripsit.me)

- Test the drug. If you don't have access to a drug checking service, reagent testing kits are available online and can give a greater understanding of what the drug contains, but they may not be suitable for identifying newer compounds or adulterants and can tell you nothing about purity or strength. Occasionally, cannabis products are found to contain synthetic cannabinoids (page 24) which are difficult to test for without drug checking services. Only buy from someone you know and trust. If the cannabis smells, tastes or looks different, or gives different effects from what you would expect, avoid taking it/more.



- Plan your doses and use a watch or timer to keep track of how frequently you are dosing.
- If you are buying multiple grams at a time, split the drug into smaller amounts to help keep track of your use and control how much you are taking.
- Use scales to measure the dose. Start with a small dose and go slow! Remember, that the more of a drug you take, the riskier it is and the more likely you are to experience negative effects.
- Avoid mixing different drugs including alcohol and medicines.
- Stay with people you trust, in a safe environment and be aware of dangers, such as water (e.g. rivers, lakes) and sharp or hot objects.
- Drugs can lower inhibitions and increase the likelihood of taking risks related to money, sex and other behaviours. Before you take drugs, set yourself some boundaries and try to stick to them.



EFFECTS

Cannabis is categorised as a cannabinoid drug. Humans have cannabinoid receptors throughout the body (most notably in the brain and gut), so when someone takes cannabis the cannabinoids from the plant bind to the receptors in the body to produce an effect. The effects of cannabis are wide ranging and it can produce stimulant, psychedelic, pain-killing or depressant effects.

Cannabis is a complex plant. There are hundreds of cannabis strains, most of which fall into three broad categories: indica, sativa and hybrid. The effects of cannabis depend on the levels of cannabinoids, particularly THC and CBD, as well as the levels of terpenes (compounds that produce smell and flavour). These compounds work together (the entourage effect) to produce the overall effect.

The effects will also depend on the type of product, how you have taken it, how you are feeling and what your environment is like (also known as the set and setting).

Cannabis may make you feel happy, calm and giggly. Some people find that they are more creative and introspective (thoughtful). They may also feel sexually aroused and more connected to the people they are with.

Other effects can include changes to motivation levels and feeling anxious, paranoid, hungry, sleepy and withdrawn (not feeling like socialising or talking).

Too much cannabis can cause dizziness and sickness, known as a whitey (page 26) especially when used in conjunction with alcohol. It can also cause dry mouth, red eyes, changes in blood pressure and blood sugar levels and an increase in heart rate.

The length of the effects is different depending on the way it has been consumed. Generally, if you are smoking or vaping cannabis it will only take a few minutes to feel the full effects. These effects wear off after around an hour and after-effects may be felt for a few hours.

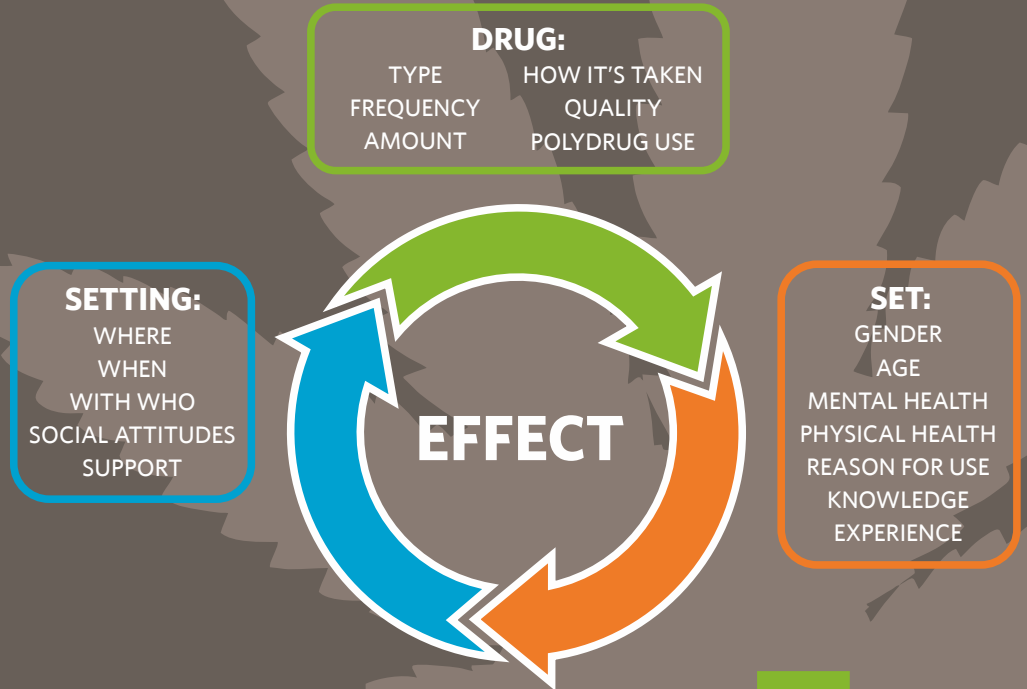
If you are eating edibles, you will not feel the effects until the cannabis has been processed by the digestive system, so it will take much longer to take effect than when inhaling. The effects can take an hour to come on (but sometimes it is as long as two hours) and can last two to eight hours. The effects of edibles can be more psychedelic and physical than inhaled cannabis. It may be difficult to move from the couch if you take too much - take care when dosing!

Cannabis-based medicinal products are legal to prescribe in the UK. When used medicinally, the primary effect is the alleviation of medical symptoms (i.e. prevention of seizures in those with epilepsy) rather than a psychoactive high.



DRUG, SET AND SETTING

The effects of cannabis are dependent on the drug (e.g. type, frequency of use, route of administration, dose, legality, purity, what other drugs it is mixed with (polydrug use)), the setting (e.g. environment, company) and the set (e.g. how you feel, expectations of the experience, current health, whether you have eaten).



Adapted from Zinberg's
Model of Drug, Set and Setting

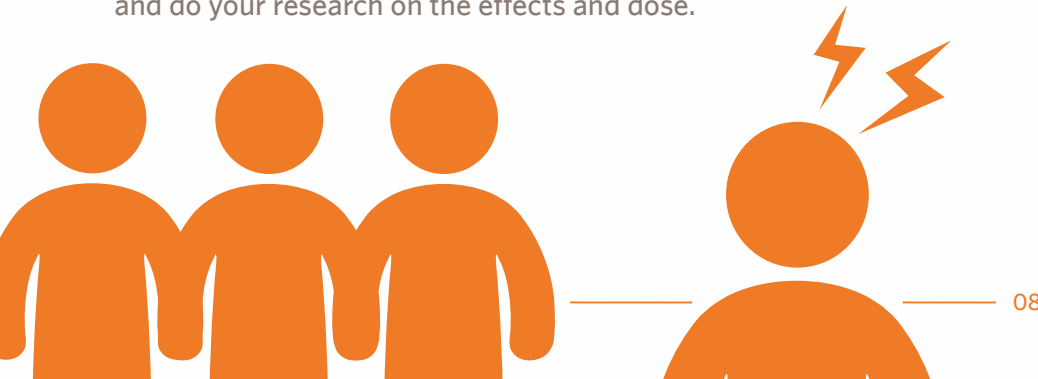


The set and setting play a critical role in the overall effect and experience of all drugs, but they are particularly important when taking drugs that have a psychedelic effect.

It can be tempting to take drugs to dull emotions and change the way you feel, but if you are not feeling well, drugs can often enhance those negative thoughts and make you feel worse.

Avoid taking drugs in a location you are not familiar with or do not feel safe in. Dress for the weather and stay away from dangers (such as heights, traffic and water). If you are feeling anxious or paranoid, avoid crowds and sit somewhere cool and quiet. These feelings will pass with time.

Avoid taking drugs alone and have a 'sober' friend around if possible. Stay with people you feel comfortable with. Eat healthily, sleep well and do your research on the effects and dose.

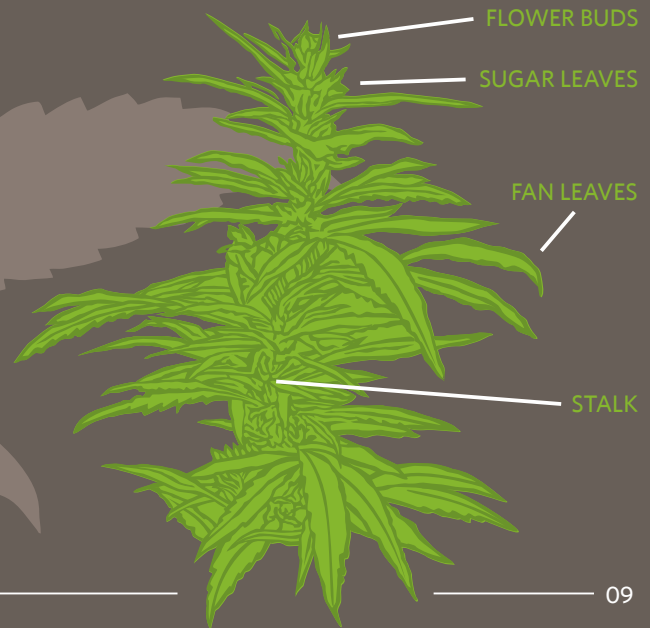


CANNABIS PRODUCTS

There are a variety of cannabis products that can be produced from the cannabis plant. Some cannabis plants (i.e. hemp) do not produce psychoactive levels of THC and can be grown to produce fibres, paper and bricks. Psychoactive cannabis products include:

- **Herbal cannabis** - the cannabis bud/flower. This will look like dried plant leaves with shades of green and brown. Cannabis bud can be consumed directly, and it is the starting point for other cannabis products. It is also known as grass, weed and green.
- **Hash** - usually a dark brown bar. It is produced by rolling parts of the bud until they form a sticky lump. It is also known as resin, hashish and soap bar.

- **Pollen** - pollen sifted and collected from the cannabis bud. It is powdery and brown with a yellow tinge and is sold as a loose powder or pressed into solid blocks.



CANNABIS CONCENTRATES

Concentrates are products made from cannabis that contain high levels of THC, generally over 40%, but sometimes as high as 90%. They are made by removing the trichomes (the part of the plant containing cannabinoids and terpenes) using physical methods or by flushing the cannabis plant with a solvent (such as butane or carbon dioxide). Solvent extraction is a dangerous process and should only be performed by those who are trained and have the correct equipment.

Concentrates come in different textures and forms with names including oil, shatter and budder:

- **Oil** – oily, liquid consistency. This extract is often added to e-cigarette liquid and vaped or added to an edible oil (such as olive oil) and added to food or administered sublingually (placed under the tongue using a dropper).
- **Shatter** – hard, brittle, glass-like consistency. Clear and yellow/orange in appearance.
- **Budder** – soft consistency. Can be spread or pressed into different shapes. Cloudy and yellow/brown in appearance.

Waxy concentrates such as shatter and budder are commonly dabbled (page 15) but they can also be vaped or added to a joint.

- **Edibles** – the cannabinoids are extracted from the cannabis bud and sugar leaves and added to food and drink. They are often found as sweet food products like cake, chocolate and sweets or drinks such as tea, fizzy juice and syrup. The cannabinoids from edibles are absorbed by the mouth (i.e. boiled sweets and lollipops) or by the gut after swallowing (i.e. cake and chocolate).

ROUTES OF ADMINISTRATION

Route of administration is the way that you take the drug. Before you take any drug:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before handling or preparing drugs.
- Wipe down the baggies or other packaging.
- Clean all surfaces and equipment regularly, paying extra attention to any mouthpieces.
- Avoid sharing drugs from the same baggie or packet.



Regardless of your route of administration, it is important to research your desired method extensively before consuming any drug and take regular breaks from drug use to give your body time to heal and readjust.



SMOKING?

Cannabis can be smoked in a joint (as pure cannabis or mixed with tobacco) or packed into a pipe or bong. Inhaling smoke can damage the mouth, throat and lungs and can cause breathing difficulties, wheezing, chest pain, shortness of breath and in extreme cases, respiratory disease and respiratory failure.

- Use glass, metal or stone pipes as these give off fewer fumes than wood and plastic.
- Clean pipes and bongs regularly. If using a water bong, change the water after every session.
- Use a grinder to grind herbal cannabis down finely before use. This makes it easier to judge a dose and helps it to burn more effectively.
- Hash can be broken from the main block into small pieces or rolled into a long snake. It may need to be lightly heated with a flame to crumble small parts off. Take care to roll hash into small, thin pieces. If the pieces are too big, they can fall from a joint when smoked (hot rocks) and cause burns.
- Sharing pipes, bongs, joints/spliffs can spread infections and viruses - only use your own.



- Use a charcoal filter as they filter out more toxic chemicals than roaches (filters made using rolled cardboard).
- If you are using a roach, use a long piece of unprinted card to avoid inhaling ink chemicals. Unbleached and sustainable rolling papers and filter card are available.
- Smoking cannabis with tobacco puts you at risk of nicotine addiction, and all the harms of tobacco smoke. Reduce the amount of tobacco, or better still, leave it out completely. This may be easier if using a pipe/bong or vape. For help to stop smoking, visit [nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking](https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking)
- Take one or two draws and then take a break to let the effects come on before taking more. The risk of the effects being overwhelming is increased if you take too much too quickly – dose low, go slow!
- Avoid holding smoke in your lungs – this will not increase the high but can cause more damage to your lungs.
- Ensure all joints/pipes/bongs are fully extinguished before leaving the room or going to sleep. Avoid smoking in bed or when lying on the couch – especially if you are tired.



VAPING?

A vaporiser heats the cannabis, rather than burning it. This still releases the flavour and cannabinoids, but without the smoke. As fewer chemicals are released, vaping is a less harmful way to consume cannabis than smoking, however it is not risk free.

- Sharing vapes and e-cigarettes can spread infections and viruses – only use your own equipment.
- Take one or two draws and then take a break to let the effects come on before taking more. The risk of the effects being overwhelming is increased if you take too much too quickly – dose low, go slow!
- Clean the vape regularly.
- Buy a good quality vaporiser. There is a risk of burns and fire from poor quality equipment.

If vaping **herbal cannabis**:

- Grind herbal cannabis before packing it into the vaporiser.
- Herbal cannabis is best vaped using a dry herb vape, rather than a regular e-cigarette vape (although e-cigarette adaptors may be available). Putting oil into a dry herb vape will damage the device.
- Dry herb vapes work by heating a small chamber in the device. Take care to let the device cool down between uses to avoid overheating.

If vaping **cannabis oil**:

- Buy good quality oil. Be aware that poor quality oil may contain contaminants which can be harmful to your health.



DABBING?

Dabbing is a method of inhaling cannabis concentrates by dropping a small amount on a hot surface and allowing it to vaporize.

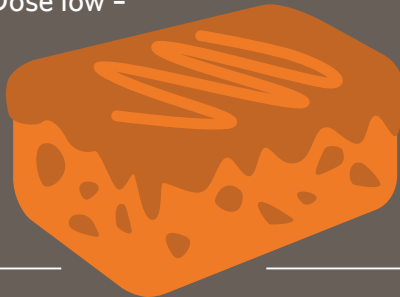
- Clean the rig (bong-like glass device) regularly.
- Sharing rigs can spread infections and viruses – only use your own equipment.
- Break the concentrate into tiny pieces.
- To avoid burning your hands, take great care and use a butane torch lighter to quickly heat the rig.
- Cannabis concentrates contain high levels of THC. Take one draw and wait for the effects to come on before taking more. The risk of the effects being overwhelming is increased if you take too much too quickly – dose low, go slow!
- Avoid holding vapor in your lungs – this will not increase the high but can cause more damage to your lungs.
- The equipment can get very hot, take regular breaks to allow it to cool down.



EATING?

When cannabis is mixed into food or drink it is known as an edible. Cannabis is not water-soluble, so the cannabinoids are extracted by cooking it in a fatty substance like oil, cream or butter which can then be used to make food such as cakes, chocolate and sweets.

- Spend time researching the effects and average dose. If you are making your own, research the process extensively and be aware that the average edible dose is far smaller than if inhaling.
- It can be more difficult to judge a dose if it has been put into food, and therefore it is easier to take too much. Dose low - remember you can always take more but you cannot take less.



- If buying a commercial cannabis edible, the manufacturer should list the THC levels on the packet. Take care to notice if this dose is for the whole product or just one portion. Many commercial edible products contain multiple doses per packet.
- It takes longer for the effects of cannabis to come on when it is eaten. Start by eating a small piece or one dose and wait at least two hours before taking more.
- Getting the 'munchies' is a common effect from cannabis. Buy normal snacking food, so that when you feel hungry you do not eat more of the edible and redose.
- Keep edibles away from others, especially children and pets. This is true for all drugs but pay particular attention with edibles as they can easily be mistaken for treats.

MIXING

Polydrug use means taking more than one drug at a time (including alcohol and medicines). Taking different drugs at the same time increases the risk of each drug.



Mixing drugs can cause unexpected and unpredictable results and is a major risk factor in drug-related deaths in Scotland.

If you do mix drugs, do your research, ensure you are somewhere safe and take way less of both substances than you would if you were only taking one.

Taking cannabis with uppers (such as cocaine, caffeine and amphetamine) increases the strain on the heart and body and may lead to increased feelings of anxiety. Take regular breaks, stay hydrated (about half a pint of water or isotonic drink per hour) and look out for signs of overheating.



Mixing cannabis with psychedelics (such as LSD) or dissociatives (such as ketamine and nitrous oxide) can make the experience more intense. You may feel an increase in bodily sensations and heart rate. The risk of experiencing nausea, feeling anxious and/or losing control is also increased. Reduce feelings of anxiety by staying calm, controlling your breathing and telling someone how you are feeling!

Mixing cannabis with downers including opioids (such as heroin) or depressants (such as alcohol, GHB and benzodiazepines like Valium and Xanax) may increase the intensity of the downer. Mixing cannabis with alcohol (or other downers) can increase the risk of nausea, dizziness and vomiting. If you or someone else needs to lie down, make sure they are lying on their side.

If you are taking cannabis and cannot avoid alcohol completely, try to limit yourself to only a few drinks, choose drinks with a lower alcohol content or drink water or soft drinks between alcoholic ones.



MEDICINAL CANNABIS

The UK legalised the use of cannabis-based medicinal products on 1 November 2018 by amending the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (2001) and Misuse of Drugs (Designation) Order (2015) to reschedule cannabis ("cannabis-based products for medicinal use in humans"), from Schedule 1 to Schedule 2.


The law does not limit the type of condition that people can access medicinal cannabis prescriptions to treat, however only a handful of medical conditions (including epilepsy and multiple sclerosis) are eligible for NHS reimbursement. Prescriptions for non-eligible conditions can cost thousands of pounds per month.

The decision to prescribe cannabis-based medicinal products cannot be made by a GP and can only be made by specialist doctors. The decision will be made on a case by case basis and it is only recommended when a patient cannot find a suitable treatment from another currently available medicine.

If someone does not have a prescription for medicinal cannabis, then their possession of it is an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) – even if they are using it to self-treat a health condition. Cannabis patient advocacy organisations can support people struggling to access cannabis as a medication.

THE LAW

The possession, sale and cultivation of (non-medicinal) cannabis is illegal in the UK.



Cannabis products that contain any level of THC are Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971). It is illegal to possess, supply, possess with intent to supply, manufacture and/or import cannabis products containing THC.

Penalties for supply (including giving it to your mates for free) are up to 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. The penalties will depend on factors such as previous convictions, the severity of the offence and the type of drug.

For low level possession of cannabis, police in Scotland may choose to issue a Recorded Police Warning, which is recorded on the Police National Computer, but is not a 'criminal record'.

Having a criminal record for drug-related offences can cause significant consequences including:

- Stigma (societal disapproval)
- Loss of employment/education
- Reduced career opportunities
- Higher insurance premiums
- Limited travel opportunities

For more information on cannabis and the law, visit: [release.org.uk](https://www.release.org.uk)

CANNABIS AND DRIVING

Drugs can impair the ability to drive. Only drive if you are sober, feel well and are not sleep deprived.

In Scotland, it is a crime to drive with a specified controlled drug in the body, in excess of a specified limit. The law applies to controlled drugs such as cocaine, cannabis, MDMA, ketamine, LSD and heroin, as well as prescription drugs, such as diazepam and methadone.

Police can make a requirement for a roadside drug test if they suspect drug use (e.g. smell cannabis), you commit a moving traffic offence (e.g. speeding or driving with a faulty light) or after any accident, regardless of fault. If a driver tests positive at the roadside using saliva from a mouth swab, they will be arrested and taken to a nearby police station for a confirmatory blood test. You can be arrested for refusing to take a roadside drug test.



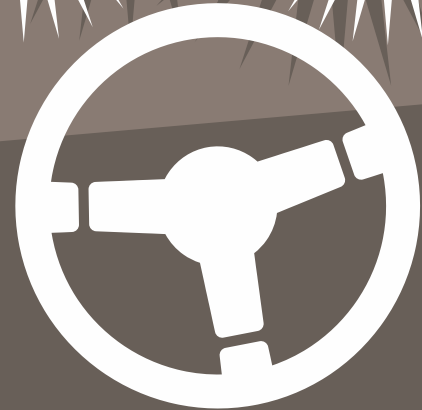
The presence of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) at 2 micrograms/L of blood or above can lead to a conviction for drug-driving.

If you're convicted of drug driving, you'll get:

- a minimum 1-year driving ban
- between 3 and 11 penalty points
- a fine of up to £5,000 and/or up to 6 months in prison
- a criminal record



Drugs can be detected long after the effects have worn off and the overall detection period will depend on the dose, frequency of use, potency and personal factors. Cannabis can be detected in the blood for several days after use (several weeks after heavy use) and long after the effects have worn off.



CANNABIDIOL

THC and CBD are the two most notable cannabinoids found in the cannabis plant. THC is known for its mind-altering effects such as euphoria. The effects of CBD are more subtle. CBD counters negative effects from THC by promoting relaxation and reducing anxiety. If you experience paranoia or anxiety when taking cannabis, a CBD supplement may help.

CBD products are made from plants with no/low THC content (like hemp), or from CBD that has been isolated (separated) from other cannabinoids, and therefore people taking it will not experience a 'cannabis high'. In its pure form, CBD is not controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971).

CBD is sold as a food supplement. 'Food supplements' are a wide range of products that include vitamins and minerals.

In the UK, supplements are not regulated as stringently as other products for 'human consumption', such as food and medicine.

If you choose to take CBD:

- Research CBD (including information on its legal status and interactions it may have with medicines).
- Only buy from a reputable and trusted supplier (and be aware that if the product is tested to contain THC it is a controlled drug and is therefore illegal to possess).
- Speak to a doctor before making any changes to medical treatment.
- Be aware that the regulations surrounding CBD products may be tightened or more heavily enforced in the future.

SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS

Cannabis should not be confused with 'synthetic cannabinoids'.

Synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists (SCRAs) are terms used to describe over 200 different psychoactive drugs. They are lab-made drugs which target cannabinoid receptors in the body and are often referred to by street names such as 'spice' and 'mamba'.

They are powdered chemicals which are dissolved and sprayed onto paper or dried plant material, hence the name 'spice'. The effects can be more harmful and unpredictable than cannabis.

Effects include a short-lived intense high, difficulty moving, feelings of heaviness, nausea and heart palpitations.

Their use can also cause seizures and organ damage. Even in small doses, people who have no history of mental health issues report severe side effects including anxiety, paranoia, suicidal thoughts and depression.

First, second and third generation cannabinoids are controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) as Class B drugs. Some newer ones are not controlled by the MoDA but are covered by the Psychoactive Substances Act (2016).

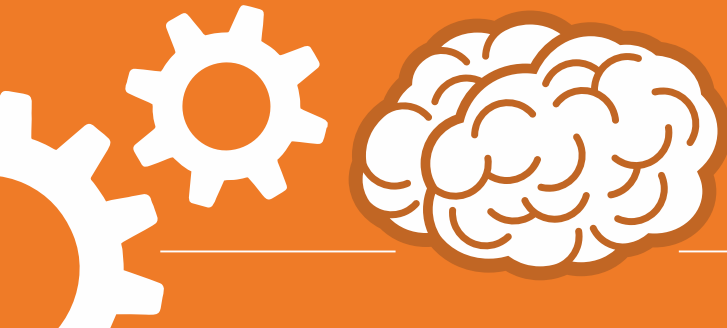
MENTAL HEALTH

The risk of experiencing an issue with your mental health when taking drugs is increased if you are not sleeping well, eating well or are already diagnosed with or experiencing mental health difficulties. Taking drugs in high doses, frequently dosing or taking more than one drug at a time also increases the risk.

While some people find that cannabis can help ease feelings of anxiety, for others it has the opposite effect. If you already have a mental health diagnosis, avoiding the use of cannabis might be the best thing to keep you well.

It is difficult to distinguish the direct impact of cannabis use from other factors such as age, social influence and predisposition to poor mental health; however, there have been studies that show that some people who regularly consume cannabis may be more likely to experience psychosis and schizophrenia.*

If you have difficult thoughts or intentions, it's important to talk about it. Speak to someone you trust. You can contact the Samaritans on 116 123 or at [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org) or Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 84 or at [breathingspace.scot](https://www.breathingspace.scot) or CALM on 0800 58 58 58 or at [thecalmzone.net](https://www.thecalmzone.net)



*www.doi.org/10.1038/mp.2016.252

FEELING SICK

Sometimes the effects of cannabis can be overwhelming and the risk of this is increased if cannabis is mixed with alcohol or other drugs. Feeling sick (as the effects of cannabis come on) is known as a 'whitey'.



Symptoms include:

- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Paleness
- Clammy skin

Sit or lie down and wait for the intensity of the symptoms to pass with time. If the symptoms worsen or the person becomes unconscious, seek medical help.



Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome (CHS) is a chronic sickness condition caused by the regular and prolonged use of cannabinoids.

Symptoms include:

- Painful stomach cramps
- Constant feelings of nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Cold sweats
- Anxiety

It is important to stay hydrated. Take small, regular sips of water and aim to drink half a pint (284mL) of water or isotonic drink per hour.

Hot showers, hot water bottles and topical capsaicin cream* applied to the abdomen may provide temporary relief from the pain.

Some people may experience relief from symptoms by reducing cannabis use but, for many, the only way to stop CHS is to stop taking cannabis. Be aware that it can take a few weeks for the cannabinoids to leave your body, so it may take a while for the symptoms to fully subside. If the symptoms continue or worsen, seek medical help.



IN AN EMERGENCY

DO!

- Keep calm
- Get help
- Call 999 (or 112)
- Give as much information as possible including location, age, gender, what has happened and be honest about what they have taken
- Stay with the casualty
- If they are distressed, sit them somewhere calm and give reassurance
- If they are fitting, keep the area safe and move anything that could hurt them
- If they are overheating, take them somewhere cooler, loosen tight clothing, cool them using fans or wet towels and give them small sips of water
- If they are unconscious, put in the recovery position (or on their side) and monitor breathing

- If they stop breathing, perform CPR (chest compressions and rescue breaths)
- If you think opioids may be involved (e.g. they have taken heroin or are on a methadone prescription) administer naloxone

DON'T!

- Leave them alone
- Inflict excessive pain to wake them
- Give any other drug
- Encourage them to vomit
- Give them anything to eat or drink (apart from small sips of water)
- Put them in a bath/shower
- Walk them about
- Attempt to restrain them

SEX

Cannabis can affect people's desire for sex in different ways. Some people might feel that they are more aroused while others might feel that being high is not the time to get physically intimate.

It's important to think about consent. Are you really feeling it? Are they? Ensure you have full consent before, and during, any sexual activity.

It's also important to think about safe sex - grab condoms, dams and whatever else will help keep you safe depending on how you have sex. Not sure about your options? Ask us!

Use lube. This reduces the risk of the condom breaking, prevents damage to the soft tissue and makes sex more enjoyable!

Some people find that cannabis use can reduce natural lubrication and this can increase the risk of passing on infections and disease. Get tested regularly for STIs and BBVs.

When we say that there is an increased risk when mixing different drugs, this includes drugs like Viagra. Anyone who has an erection for more than four hours should seek urgent medical attention.

Be aware that if you vomit or experience diarrhoea when taking drugs, your contraceptive pill could be affected. Use a barrier method or think about long term contraception such as an injection or implant.

MUNCHIES

Cannabis can increase your appetite and can lead to food cravings – usually unhealthy ones such as crisps and sweets. Poor nutrition can lower your immune system leaving you more prone to coughs and colds.

- Eat before you get high – if you are full you might not be as tempted to snack.
- Make yourself some healthy snacks in advance so you have more control over the portion size and content of what you're eating while high.
- If you get cravings for sweet stuff, try dried fruit, yoghurt covered nuts, homemade popcorn, smoothies or slices of fresh fruit.
- Make sure you are aiming for a good mix of calcium, protein, iron and healthy fats. Try to pack lots of vitamins into your diet and take vitamin supplements if needed.
- Are you actually just thirsty? Water, isotonic drinks and herbal teas are healthier alternatives to fizzy, sugary drinks.



- Staying well hydrated can also prevent the extreme dry mouth that many people experience when smoking and vaping cannabis. Carry a water bottle and aim to drink half a pint (284mL) of water per hour. It is important to make sure that you do not drink more than a pint an hour (568mL) as this can lead to water intoxication.
- Are you just looking for something to do with your hands? Try something creative like drawing, massage or playing music.
- Try planning and preparing a week of meals in advance - this will make you less likely to skip meals.

For support on eating disorders, visit Beat:

beateatingdisorders.org.uk

If you are diabetic, it is important to check your blood sugar is at a safe level before, during and after taking drugs. Read our Drugs and Diabetes resource for more info:

crew.scot/drugs-and-diabetes



SLEEP MANAGEMENT

Does cannabis help you fall asleep? Many people swear by a bedtime smoke, but cannabis can negatively impact the quality of your sleep. Try to avoid cannabis right before trying to sleep and take an hour to wind down before going to bed.

Avoid eating, drinking alcohol and taking stimulants (including nicotine or caffeinated drinks) in the few hours before bedtime.

Avoid taking other drugs to help you get to sleep. Mindfulness and breathing exercises can help you relax.

Try to exercise each day. Even short periods of light exercise can improve sleep quality.

Maintain a regular sleep routine and stick to it.

The light from electronic devices can interfere with sleep. Use an app or change the settings on your phone to reduce the blue light emitted from the screen.

Keep your bedroom cool and dark when you are trying to sleep. Make your bed comfortable. Keep your sheets clean and use a good pillow.

Pay attention to what works for you - keep going when you find it!



CUTTING DOWN?

If you are taking cannabis more frequently than planned, or in a way that does not feel intentional it might be a good idea to lay off it for a while. Check out how risky your cannabis use is at: crew.scot/check-it-out

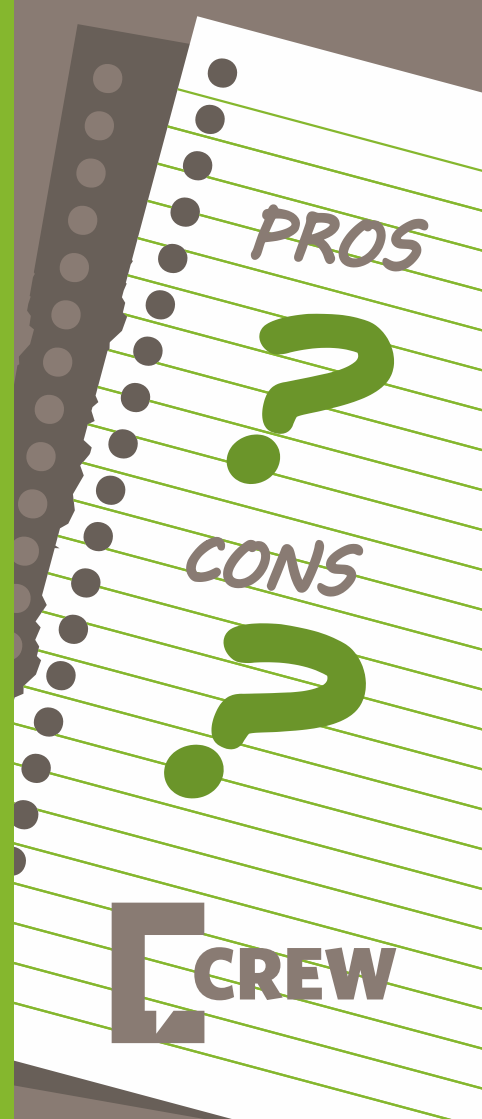
Think about your use - what are the pros and cons? Write them down. Set small, manageable and measurable goals, like increasing the length of time between each dose.

Out and about? Only carry what you plan on taking. If you have a few grams on you it is easy to take more than you anticipated. Leave what you don't need at home (in a safe place).

Track patterns of use. Split up daily and weekly amounts in advance to keep an eye on how much you are taking.

Identify strategies for managing triggers. If you usually take cannabis with certain people, hold off seeing them for a bit.

Manage your cravings. Try natural highs such as light exercise and meditation.



Even if you don't want to stop completely, it is important to take regular breaks from cannabis to allow your body to rest and to 'reset' your tolerance so that you do not need to take as much to get the same effects.

If you stop taking cannabis after heavy and prolonged use, you may experience withdrawal symptoms including irritability, restlessness, appetite changes, vivid dreams and disturbed sleep. The intensity of symptoms will reduce with time.

Drug services can help support you to reduce, stabilise or cease drug taking. Consider talking to someone if you are finding it difficult to stop taking drugs. For drug services in your area, visit: [scottishdrugservices.com](https://www.scottishdrugservices.com)



WORRIED ABOUT OTHERS?

Are you concerned about a friend or loved one's drug use? It's not always easy to help but your support is a powerful motivator. Try to have open and honest conversations with the person when you are both calm and sober.

Let them know how their behaviour is affecting you and others, and that your concerns come from a place of love. It can be helpful to write down what you want to say in advance. It is always of primary importance to keep yourself (and your dependants) safe.

It can be helpful to chat about issues you are experiencing with people you trust. For information on ways to help, as well as details of family services and support (either online, over the phone, in person or in a group), visit: sfad.org.uk



If you are in Edinburgh and the Lothians and are concerned about your own, or a loved one's drug use, Crew is here for you! We provide free, inclusive, non-judgemental counselling for those experiencing problems related to psychostimulant drugs.

**To find out more, call 0131 220 3404
or visit: crew.scot**

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