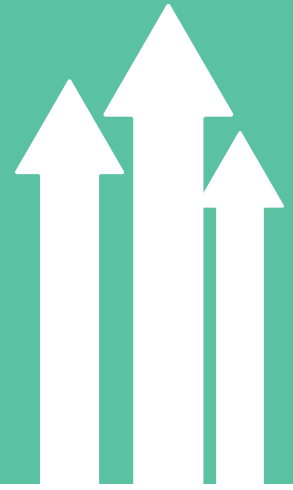


Information for parents: Cannabis Edible Products



This factsheet is an update on cannabis edible products for concerned parents. This information should be read alongside the HSE resource ‘Alcohol and Drugs: A Parent’s Guide’.

Young people and drug use

Adolescence is a period when young people come into contact with new ideas and behaviours. It is a time to “try out” adult roles and responsibilities. The desire to take on more independence may see young people seeking to explore what they or their peer group view as more ‘grown up’, interesting or new ideas which could include substance use.

At the same time as these new issues are emerging, it is important to recognise that the young person’s brain is still growing from the ages of 12 until their mid-20s. Using alcohol or drugs during this time can damage the growing brain, causing long-term emotional problems and difficulties with learning, planning and memory.

Substance use (or other behaviours) of peers, as well as rejection by peers, can be important influences on the behaviour of young people, although the influence of parents still remains very significant – **parents matter!**

Research shows that young people view their parents as credible sources of information and are influenced by parental beliefs and behaviours. By parents initiating drug awareness discussions, it means they can create an understanding that the topic of drugs and alcohol is open for discussion in an honest and compassionate space.

The most commonly used substances in Ireland are alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine. New, different trends may emerge from time to time among different groups of people. These novel trends may be reported extensively in the media and generate a lot of attention. Recently, one such trend was in relation to cannabis edible products such as sweets and jellies.

I’m concerned about cannabis edible products – what are they?

Cannabis can be categorised as both a depressant and psychedelic type substance. It can have different effects for different people based on a number of personal factors and how much is taken at a given time.

The cannabis plant is complex and contains hundreds of compounds called ‘Cannabinoids’. The main psychoactive compound is called THC (delta9 tetrahydrocannabinol). Another well-known compound is CBD.

Cannabis has complex effects, many of which are considered ‘depressant’. However, it stimulates the heart, increasing both blood pressure and pulse.



Cannabis comes in the form of leaf, buds (“weed”), resin (“hash”) and oil. The market and variety of cannabis based products continues to expand. It is usually consumed by smoking or vaping but can also be eaten or drunk known as ‘edibles’.

Cannabis edible products

Cannabis ‘edibles’ are food products infused with cannabis. Edibles come in many forms—including baked goods, sweets, ‘gummy bears’, ‘cannabis gummies’ chocolates and lozenges. We are also aware of cannabis drinks available on the Irish market known as ‘THC lean’.

Food products containing cannabis have been available internationally in locations such as the Netherlands as cakes sold in coffee shops. More recently, food products containing cannabis have emerged as products sold as part of the legalised market in Northern America but are not legalised in an Irish context. Many of these new products replicate commercial food brands.

Why consuming edibles is different to smoking cannabis

Avoidance of smoking: Cannabis smoke contains many of the same toxins and carcinogens as tobacco smoke. Over the long term, smoking any substance can cause some damage to the lungs. By eating cannabis, this risk is avoided.

Delayed effects: A person will not feel the effects immediately like smoking cannabis. In some cases it could take over two hours before the peak effects are felt. It is harder for a person to know an accurate dose or gauge how they will react compared to inhaling.

Harder to predict the effects /easier to take too much: People may easily consume too much THC without knowing until the effects are felt some time later. This can increase the risks of adverse mental health reactions such as prolonged hallucinations, anxiety or behaviour changes.

Compounds are altered in the stomach, intestine and liver: The body processes edible products in a different way which leads to more intense effects.

Cannabis edibles are an issue in my area – what should I discuss with my child?

Start the discussion: Try opening with a phrase like: “I saw something in the paper about young people. I wanted to discuss it with you to see if you know anything about it...” and take it from there.

Prepare active listening tips: When a parent listens actively, this can encourage your child to talk and express their feelings. Get more advice on this approach from the HSE resource ‘Alcohol and Drugs: A Parent’s Guide’.

What should my child know? The basic facts about substances, why they should avoid them - especially while their bodies and brains are still developing, ways to avoid harm, ways to enjoy themselves and cope with life’s ups and downs without using substances.

Raise your concerns about cannabis edible products as well as other substances: Avoid focusing on one drug. Ask them what substances they are aware of that young people might use, if any. Be mindful that cannabis edibles may not be an issue in your area. Other substances like alcohol or other cannabis products or ecstasy could be more well-known. New trends can also emerge from time to time.

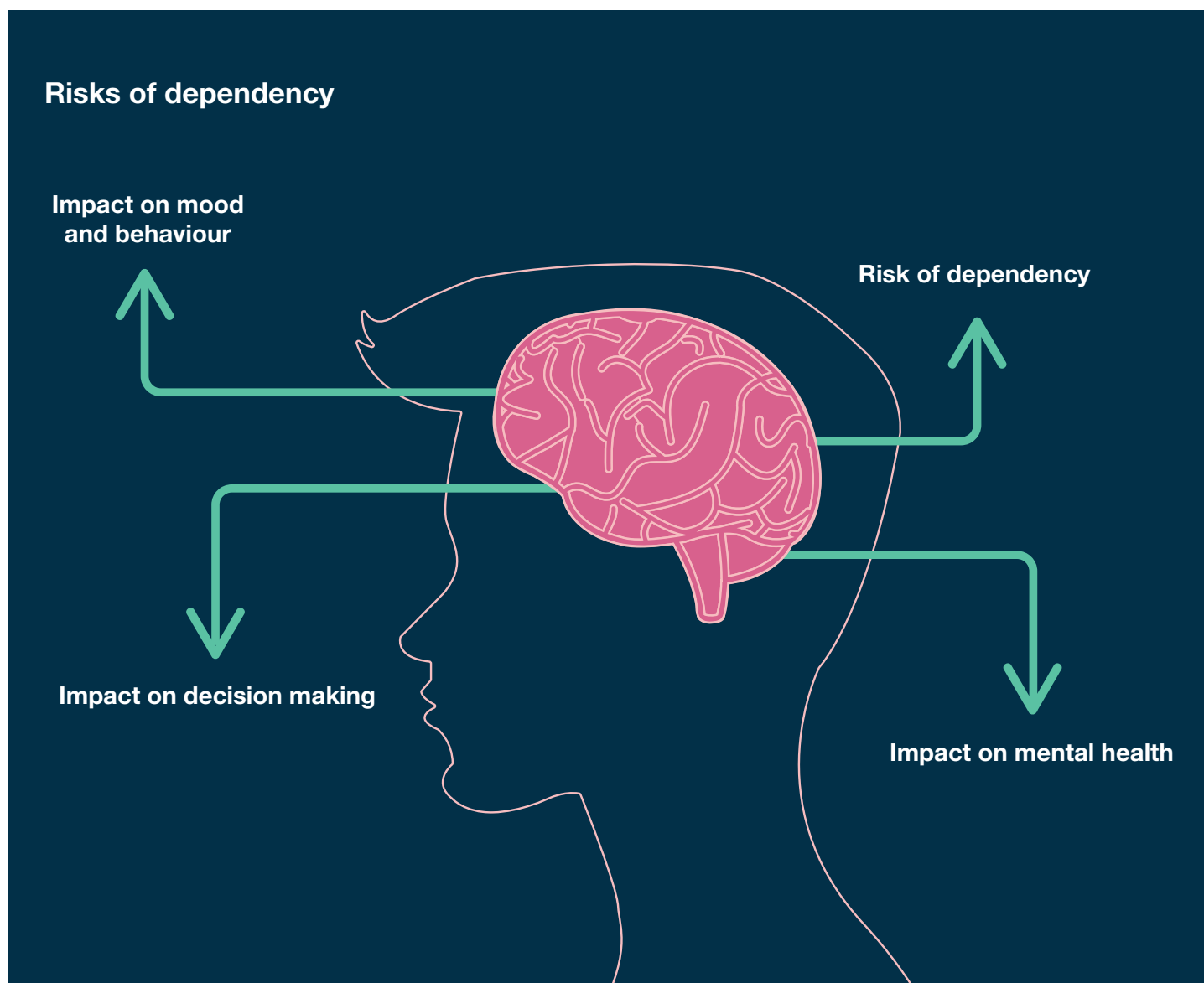
Why do people use substances? When looking at the risks, it is also useful to show that you understand why young people use substances. The most commonly reported reason given by young people for initially trying a drug is curiosity. For example, people use cannabis edibles to feel ‘chilled out’, ‘relaxed’ or ‘a high’.



Discuss the situation: We need to be mindful of how children process the information they see around them. Ask have they seen the media interest, public discussions or people using in your community. Remind them that this doesn't necessarily mean it is a 'trend' among young people or that "everyone is doing it".

How do they feel about it? Ask them how they feel about the recent media or local attention about cannabis edible products. Find out what do they know about it and ask if they have any questions? If you can't answer their question you could work together to find the answer – it's ok not to know everything!

Let them know they can contact you in a crisis: While it is OK to make it clear to your child that you disapprove of drug use, you should also make it clear that they should always contact you in a crisis. No matter what caused the crisis or emergency, you will be there to help them through it.



Who is at greater risk to substance harm?

- If there is a history of family mental health concerns and substance dependency
- Who start using at a younger age
- People who use frequently
- People using to cope with trauma, feelings and emotions



The effects of smoking and ingesting cannabis

INHALING

(smoking or vaping)



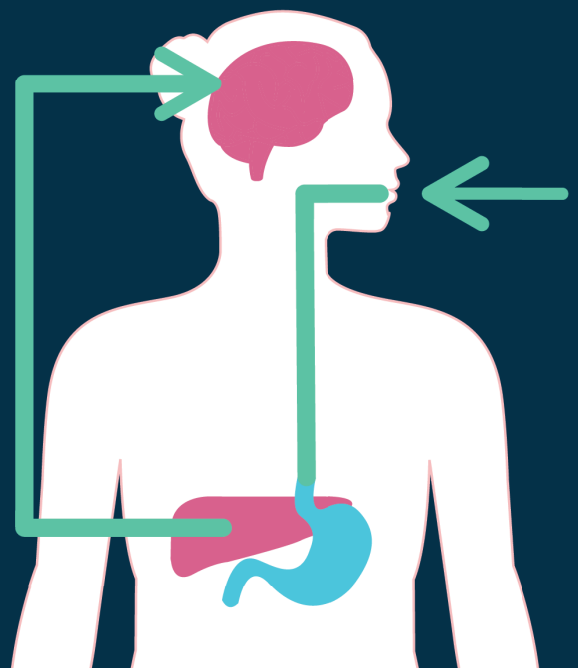
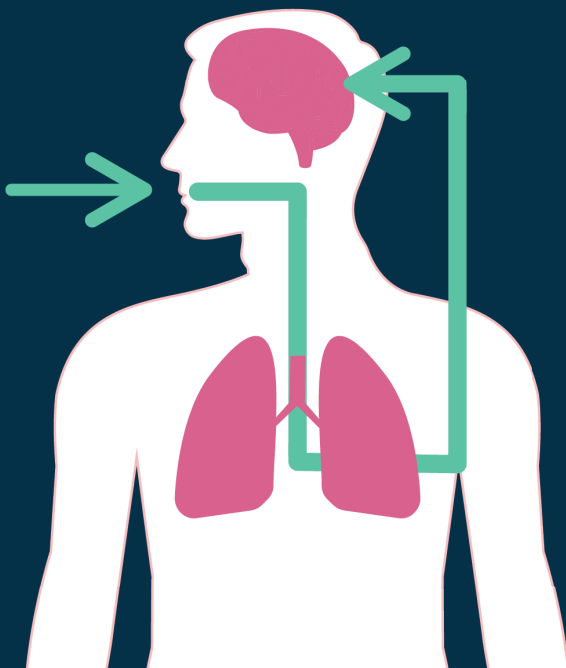
Cannabis smoke or vapour delivers THC into the lungs where it passes directly into the bloodstream and brain.

INGESTING

(eating or drinking)



When eaten, cannabis first travels to the stomach and then to the liver before the bloodstream and the brain. Eating can cause more potent effects compared to smoking due to how the liver processes edibles.



Effects of smoking

You will feel the effects from **seconds to a few minutes** of inhaling.



Effects of ingestion

The effects will be felt anything from **30 minutes to 2 hours** after ingesting. This can vary from person to person.

Peak effects

Full effects can peak within **30 minutes**.



Peak effects

Full effects can peak within **4 hours**.

Length of effects

The length of effects vary from person and can last up to **4 hours** or longer for some people.



Length of effects

Effects can last up to **12 hours** after use.



Are you concerned about your child's regular use of cannabis or cannabis edible products?

If your child is using cannabis or any drug regularly you may wish to seek an appointment for your child at an adolescent drug and alcohol treatment service. These services exist across Ireland and parents can generally make the referral themselves. You can also contact your local or regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force (DATF).

To find out where your local adolescent drug and alcohol treatment service or DATF is, check out [Drugs.ie/services](https://www.drugs.ie/services) or phone the **HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline** at **1800 459 459** Monday – Friday 9:30 am – 5:30 pm or email helpline@hse.ie

For more information go to [Drugs.ie](https://www.drugs.ie) or download the HSE resource **'Alcohol and Drugs: A Parent's Guide'**



DRUGS.ie
Drug and Alcohol Information and Support

