

Cannabis: Basics

Other names: *weed, hash, ganja, smoke, wacky backy, puff, blow, draw, marijuana*

- UK's most commonly used illegal drug
- Usually smoked with tobacco in a joint or spliff
- Also smoked using bong, or pipes and can be made into cakes or cookies and eaten — this makes the effects last longer and can cause greater levels of worry and anxiety in some users whilst stoned in this way



- Cannabis commonly comes as hash (pictured above on the right) or as a dried bud—*weed*—(above left)
- It can also come as an oil, although this is fairly uncommon

The effects:

- Feelings of relaxation and euphoria
- Users can experience giggling fits
- Users can feel anxiety, confusion and experience short-term memory loss and poor coordination.
- Heavy users may become lethargic and apathetic and find it hard to concentrate.
- Can bring on craving for certain food or the 'munchies'

Legal status

Please refer to [http: www.release.org.uk](http://www.release.org.uk) where information is kept up-to-date

- Need more advice
www.drugscope.co.uk
www.talktofrank.com

Risks:

- Affects the short term memory and ability to concentrate
- Affects co-ordination
- Smoking cannabis damages the lungs, throat and mouth
- Feelings of dependence
- Mixing cannabis and other drugs can have unpredictable effects

Cannabis: More Information

Side effects and risks

- Cannabis increases heart rate and blood pressure (a problem for those who suffer from high blood pressure, or heart disease)
- Smoking cannabis damages the lungs, throat and mouth
- Cannabis users are more likely to suffer from chronic bronchitis
- Severe cases of lung damage have been reported in young, very heavy users
- Avoid using cannabis during pregnancy
- Some users become reliant on this drug

When users try to stop they may feel:

- Craving (psychological)
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Lethargy (feeling tired)
- Irritability
- Mood changes
- Insomnia (unable to sleep)



Driving is dangerous on this substance

For further information please refer to

<http://www.brake.org.uk/index.php?p=913>

www.drugdrive.co.uk

<http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/drinkdriving/drugs/index.html>

THC

- THC is the chemical in cannabis that gets the user stoned
- Cannabis bud (pictured), also known as weed, can contain up to 20% THC
- Hash, or *solid* contains around 6% or less THC

How cannabis is smoked

- Cannabis is often rolled with tobacco and smoked as a joint
- However, it is also smoked without tobacco using a pipe, or a bong which cools the smoke as it is drawn through water
- There are many improvised variations on the bong (shown here) that use plastic drinks bottles, tin foil or wire gauze, and/or a socket (borrowed from someone's tool kit)



Harm Minimisation

Most cigarette papers contain chemicals that have been used to bleach it (to turn it white), so try to use as little paper as possible

Use cardboard as a roach (not a filter) because although a filter will help take out some of the tar it also removes some of the THC, encouraging the user to roll up again and again to get the same level of stoned-ness as 1 unfiltered joint.

In the end, more unhealthy carcinogenic (cancer-causing) chemicals will be absorbed into the blood stream by smoking several filtered joints as opposed to one unfiltered joint.

Avoid breathing fumes from hot plastic, or hot tin-foil as these may contain large amounts of toxic (poisonous) chemicals

Avoid inhaling too deeply—it is not necessary to draw smoke into the bottom of the lungs in order to get stoned

Avoid holding smoke in your lungs—it does not get you more stoned, instead it causes a build up of carbon dioxide (which causes a dizzying effect that people mistake for the effects of THC) and allows more time for tar and other damaging parts of the smoke to settle in the tiny, delicate airways of the lungs

Cannabis affects your mood (which then affects your behaviour) in many different ways. Think carefully about reducing or stopping your cannabis use if you find your own actions or behaviour are unconstructive, e.g. you put things off, you miss appointments, or if your behaviour is beginning to cause difficulties for those around you.

Do a 5-minute online self-assessment at www.knowcannabis.org.uk to find out if your cannabis use may be causing you problems