

**KNOW THE FACTS**

# Cannabis



## Cannabis Use Disorder

Signs that someone might have a cannabis use disorder:

- Giving up important activities with friends and family to use cannabis.
- Trying, but failing, to quit.
- Using cannabis even when it causes problems at home, school, or work.

About 1 in 10 users will have serious problems with cannabis. For those who begin using before age 18, the risk rises to 1 in 6.

## Cannabis and Driving



Like alcohol, cannabis makes driving unsafe. Reaction time is slower and depth perception is distorted.

Using alcohol with cannabis causes worse driving than either of those by itself.

## Cannabis Use



Long-term cannabis smoking or vaping makes breathing problems worse, and increases chronic lung problems, including coughing, wheezing, and mucus production.

The parts of the cannabis plant that are used are the flowering tops (buds) and leaves. Cannabis can be smoked or vaped. In states where cannabis is legal for medical or recreational use, a wide range of “edibles” are available, including baked goods, gummies, and other candies.

Cannabis buds and leaves can be rolled into joints or smoked in cigar wrappers. It can also be baked into muffins, brownies, and other snack foods.



Cannabis pipes come in many sizes and designs.



Early research suggests that vaping-related illness could be linked to vaping THC.

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## **CANNABIS IS A NATURAL PLANT. HOW COULD IT BE DANGEROUS?**

- Cannabis contains a psychoactive drug called Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is an unclassified substance meaning it has properties of a depressant, stimulant, and hallucinogen. THC is also addictive.
- Cannabis smoke has been shown to contain many of the same toxins, irritants, and carcinogens as tobacco smoke.
- Smoking or vaping cannabis can affect the immune system and the body's ability to fight disease.
- Research shows that smoking or vaping cannabis can cause chronic bronchitis.

## **ISN'T CANNABIS LESS DANGEROUS THAN ALCOHOL OR TOBACCO?**

We honestly don't know; it can take decades to study long-term drug effects. Some studies suggest that people who use cannabis before age 18 can have problems enjoying life without it, and that 17% will develop serious problems related to cannabis use.

## **WHAT ABOUT CANNABIS AS A MEDICINE?**

THC can help with cancer-related nausea, and may reduce MS spasms, but there are FDA-approved THC-based medicines already available for these conditions.

THC may reduce some chronic pain in adults, but smoking or vaping cannabis for possible health benefits can be dangerous. Cannabis smoke contains hundreds of chemicals, and little is known about possible side effects. We also know that the aerosol that is produced by vaping cannabis contains chemicals, some of which are carcinogens.

Self-medicating with cannabis can also be dangerous for anyone with mental illness: the use of cannabis has been connected with the increased risk of depression, schizophrenia and the worsening of bipolar disorder symptoms.

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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; National Institute on Drug Abuse; SAMHSA; U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration.