

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MIXING CANNABIS WITH OTHER DRUGS?

Mixing cannabis with other drugs such as alcohol or prescription drugs can produce unpredictable results. The effects of cannabis and the other drug can become stronger than if they were used separately. When people drink alcohol and use cannabis at the same time, they may have strong reactions such as nausea, vomiting, panic (sudden fear) and paranoia.

WHAT EFFECT DOES CANNABIS USE HAVE ON PREGNANCY AND BREAST-FEEDING?

It is best to use no drug during pregnancy. Using cannabis when pregnant could harm the baby and increase the chances of premature birth or smaller birth-weight. Using cannabis when breast-feeding may affect the development of the baby, as the cannabis gets into their body too. Research shows that among regular cannabis users it may affect fertility and the hormones connected to reproduction among both women and men.

DOES CANNABIS USE HAVE AN EFFECT ON DRIVING SKILLS?

Using cannabis makes it more difficult to drive safely when the effects of cannabis can result in altered perception (the way you think or understand something), loss of body and reflex coordination and sleepiness. It is especially risky to drive after drinking alcohol and using cannabis, as the combination can increase these effects.

WHAT WILL I EXPERIENCE DURING CANNABIS WITHDRAWAL?

A person dependent on cannabis will likely experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop using. Withdrawal symptoms commonly start on the first day of stopping, and usually peak within the first two to three days of quitting. People may experience withdrawal symptoms for less than a week, although sleep disturbance may be affected for longer.

Withdrawal symptoms may include:

- sleep difficulties including insomnia and strange dreams
- mood swings/irritability
- depression
- anxiety/nervousness
- restlessness/physical tension
- reduced appetite
- nausea
- cravings (strong desire) to smoke cannabis

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RESPONSE TO DRUGS AND RELATED ORGANISED CRIME IN NIGERIA
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GET THE FACTS ABOUT CANNABIS



WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis is derived from a plant called *Cannabis sativa*. Cannabis is a depressant drug which means it slows down the activity of the central nervous system and the messages going between the brain and the body. Taken in large doses cannabis can be hallucinogenic and the person may have visions (seeing something) which are not real. The main active chemical in cannabis is THC (delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol) and it is this part of the plant that gives the 'high'. Cannabis use is mostly responsible for changes in the mood, thoughts, perceptions and behaviour among those that use the drug. Cannabis is seen in three main forms: marijuana, hashish and hash oil. Cannabis is commonly smoked, eaten or sometimes in Nigeria used in tea as tea leaves. Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in the world, as well as in Nigeria.

WHAT ARE OTHER COMMON NAMES FOR CANNABIS?

In Nigeria cannabis is also commonly known as follows: Igbo, Weewee, Weed, Marijuana, Mary and Joan, Choko, Yoyo, Kush, Skunk, Green Leaf, Ghanja, Grass, Indian Hemp (*street term*), Blaze, Taba, Ndedeko, Bendel Market, Joint, Pot and Genye.

WHAT ARE THE SHORT AND LONG TERM EFFECTS OF CANNABIS?

The effects of cannabis will vary from person to person, and depends on many things including a person's size, weight and health, whether they are accustomed to taking the drug, their mood, whether other drugs are present in their body, strength of cannabis, and the amount taken. When cannabis is smoked it enters the bloodstream quicker and the effects can be felt more rapidly compared to being eaten.

Short term effects (can last 2 – 4 hours after use)

- loss of inhibition (can feel unusually well, happy, talkative)
- spontaneous laughter
- quiet and reflective mood, drowsy (tired)
- intense or altered senses to sound, colour and other sensations
- altered memory and thinking, confusion
- anxiety (worry, nervous, tense) and mild paranoia (feeling undue suspicion of others)
- altered vision and bloodshot eyes
- relaxation or sleepiness
- dryness of the eyes, mouth and throat
- reduced body coordination and balance

- decreased nausea (feeling of sickness in stomach)
- increased appetite (hungry for food)

Long term cannabis use can have many effects

- **Brain:** impaired concentration, memory and learning ability
- **Lungs:** sore throat, asthma and bronchitis
- **Hormones:** lowered sex drive, irregular menstrual cycle and lowered sperm count
- **Immune system:** more likely to develop coughs, colds and other illnesses associated with an impaired immune system
- **Mental health:** heavy and regular use may result in a drug-induced psychosis, or cannabis psychosis. Psychosis can include symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that do not exist or are distorted), and disorganised thinking or speech.

Regular and heavy cannabis use during adolescence is associated with more severe negative outcomes than use during adulthood.

DOES CANNABIS CAUSE MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESS?

Mental illnesses associated with cannabis include depression, anxiety and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia (mental disorder involving a breakdown in the relation between thought, emotion, and behavior). Symptoms of cannabis psychosis (seeing or hearing things that do not exist or are distorted) can last several hours or up to 3 days (rare), and mostly go away when

cannabis use is stopped. Scientific evidence supports an association between cannabis use and schizophrenia but cannabis being a cause of schizophrenia has not been established. Despite cannabis use increasing in many countries, higher levels of schizophrenia have not increased. Cannabis use might trigger problems if you or a family member have a personal history of mental health problems. A pre-disposition (tendency) to schizophrenia can be triggered by cannabis use.

CAN YOU BECOME DEPENDENT ON CANNABIS?

Cannabis is associated with a lower risk of dependence compared to other illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin, or the regulated (legal) drugs such as nicotine and alcohol. Research has found many people who use cannabis across their lifetime do not progress to cannabis dependence. However, some people do become dependent on cannabis and go on to use it regularly, or develop problems with it. People who are dependent on cannabis find they crave the drug and it becomes far more important than other activities in their life. Dependence on cannabis can be psychological, physical, or both. People who are psychologically dependent may feel an urge to use it when they are in specific surroundings (such as a nightclub) or socialising with friends. Physical dependence occurs when a person's body adapts (or builds tolerance) to cannabis and gets used to functioning with the cannabis present in their body.