

**PRANK**

**cannabis**

**FIND OUT THE FACTS**





**"Cannabis can't be harmful because it comes from a plant so it's natural."**

**"It's OK to smoke cannabis in the street – you'll only get a warning."**

**"It's no big deal. Most people use cannabis these days."**

**"Smoking cannabis puts you on a slippery slope to using harder drugs."**

**Some people seem to think they know a lot about cannabis...**



# ...but how can you tell the facts from the fiction?

**FACT:** Cannabis can cause health problems both physical and mental, including things like anxiety and paranoia. Just because it's from a plant doesn't mean it's harmless.

**FACT:** Cannabis is illegal. It's a Class B drug and you can get up to five years in prison for possessing it and 14 years for supplying it.

**FACT:** After alcohol and tobacco, cannabis is the most commonly used drug in the UK. But most people AREN'T using it. Less than one in eight adults (aged 16-59) and less than one in five young people (aged 16-24) say they have used cannabis in the last year.

**FACT:** A small number of people who use cannabis go on to use other drugs. But most people do not.

**Want to know more?**  
**Use this leaflet to find out about:**

- 02** cannabis: the basics
- 06** what it does
- 10** cannabis and mental health
- 11** spotting the signs
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And don't forget, for friendly, confidential advice and information, you can call

**FRANK on 0800 77 66 00**

24 hours a day. Calls are free from landlines and some mobiles. There's also a textphone for the hard of hearing on **0800 917 8765**. Or go to **talktofrank.com**

# cannabis: the basics

**Cannabis** is a naturally occurring **drug** made from parts of the cannabis plant.

Cannabis plants grow in a variety of climates and can reach up to 15 feet tall.

**Cannabis isn't new.** It's been used throughout history for medicinal and social purposes. The Chinese first recorded the properties of cannabis in texts dating back to 2,700 BC.

The cannabis plant contains **tetrahydrocannabinol** (THC) as its main active ingredient. Different forms of cannabis tend to contain different amounts of **THC**. The higher the amount, the stronger the effects will be.

**People use cannabis to relax and chill out.** Most people mix it with tobacco and smoke it like a cigarette in a 'joint'. Some people put it in a pipe or 'bong' and smoke it that way. Others make tea with it or bake it in 'hash cakes' or cookies.

Some people use the cannabis plant to help with certain **medical problems** (for example, medical problems that can develop with multiple sclerosis). It is still illegal to possess cannabis no matter what you are using it for. The development of medicinal cannabis products much safer than herbal cannabis, which could have a beneficial use in certain

specific disorders, continue to be researched.

With long term or heavy use, smoking cannabis can cause lung disease and possibly cancer, especially as it is often mixed with tobacco.

It has also been linked with **mental health problems**. Regular cannabis use, especially when young, can lead to an increased risk of later developing a psychotic illness like schizophrenia.

"My mum found out I was smoking joints and she went ballistic. She was worried that I'd become a druggie and start taking other stuff. She completely blew it all out of proportion. I'll have a spliff every now and then, but it doesn't control my life. There's no way I'd get into stuff like coke or heroin."

**Kelly, 17**

**See pages 4 – 5 for the lowdown on the different types of cannabis.**



# what does it look like?

**Cannabis comes in different forms and strengths:**



## **Cannabis resin**

(hash or hashish) is a brown/black substance that is scraped from the cannabis plant and pressed into lumps.

## **Herbal cannabis**

(marijuana, grass or weed) is the dried leaves and flowering plants of the cannabis plant. It looks like tightly packed dried garden herbs.



**Cannabis oil** is the least common. It is dark and sticky and often comes in a small jar.

## Did you know?

The average amount of THC in stronger forms of herbal cannabis, such as sinsemilla and skunk, is now more than double that of traditional grass. The average potency of THC is now around 16% (compared to 6% in 1995) while the levels in traditional grass and hash haven't changed much at all. In recent years, these strong forms of cannabis have become the most common types of herbal cannabis available. But you can still get very strong batches of traditional grass and weak batches of skunk so you really can't predict the actual effects before using.

(TCH contents sourced from Young People and Cannabis, Healthwise 2004 and the Home Office Cannabis Potency Study 2008)



### Sinsemilla

is made using the flowering tops of unfertilised female cannabis plants that are usually grown indoors using intensive cultivation methods.

**Skunk** is a form of cannabis that was originally named for its strong smell. It can be a lot stronger than other varieties and has a more powerful effect on the mind. Skunk is grown using intensive breeding techniques and is now the most common type of cannabis used in the UK. The health risks associated with using cannabis could be worse if you smoke skunk.



**Cannabis goes by a variety of terms including...**

**bhang  
black  
blast  
blow  
blunts  
Bob Hope  
bush  
dope  
draw  
ganja  
gear  
grass  
hash  
hashish  
hemp  
herb  
marijuana  
pot  
puff  
Northern Lights  
resin  
sensi  
sinsemilla  
shit  
skunk  
smoke  
soap  
spliff  
wackybacky  
weed**

# what it does: short term

## On the one hand...

- > the effects of cannabis are fairly immediate when smoked and last from an hour to a few hours
- > cannabis can make people feel relaxed and happy
- > others get the giggles and find everything really funny
- > hunger pangs are common and are known as 'getting the munchies'
- > sometimes it can make people hallucinate. Colours and sounds appear brighter and sharper

## but...

- > cannabis increases heart rate and can affect blood pressure, which can be risky for people with heart problems
- > some people have one puff and feel sick
- > cannabis can make asthma worse
- > it affects some people's co-ordination and their reactions become slower
- > some users – even hardcore smokers – can get anxious, panicky, suspicious or even acutely paranoid
- > cannabis use may cause a relapse of psychotic symptoms in people who have mental health problems
- > regular, heavy use can cause short-lived paranoid or psychotic states that may require hospital treatment.

## Did you know?

Driving under the influence of drugs is dangerous. It is just as illegal as drink-driving and carries the same penalties.





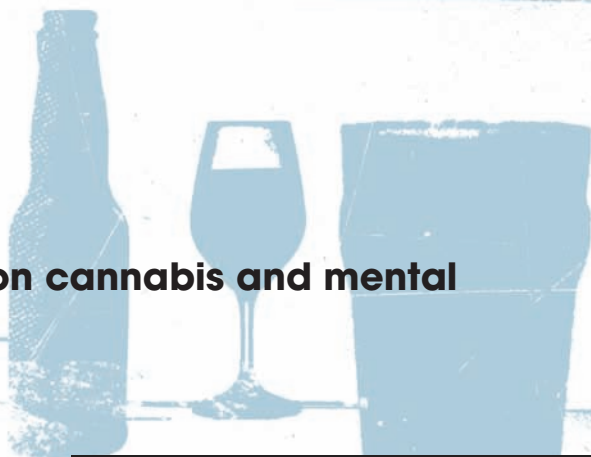
"Sometimes cannabis is amazing and sometimes it's a real downer. It depends on where I am, who I'm with and how I'm feeling. But it also depends on how strong it is. Sometimes it can really wipe me out."

**Jason, 16**

## Mixing it up

- > mixing cannabis with other drugs is always risky
  - > it's impossible to know for sure how a combination of drugs will affect any one person as everyone reacts differently
  - > using cannabis with alcohol can make someone feel dizzy and disoriented. Taking cannabis after drinking makes some people sick
- > sometimes, people use cannabis to help them 'come down' after a high on drugs like ecstasy or cocaine. But it doesn't always have the desired effect – it can make people feel edgy and paranoid instead of calm

**For more information on cannabis and mental health, see page 10.**



# what it does: long term

**The biggest risks from cannabis are associated with regular, long-term use. These risks could be worse if you smoke a lot, are young and smoke strong cannabis, like skunk.**

- > it can make it harder to learn and concentrate
- > it can be addictive
- > it affects short-term memory so can make people forgetful
- > it can affect motivation
  - users can lose interest in things and lose touch with their friends
- > smoking cannabis can cause lung disease, and possibly lung cancer, in the long term or with heavy use
- > cannabis smoke contains many of the same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco
- > frequent use of cannabis may lead to fertility problems in men and women
- > regular use of cannabis is associated with an increased risk of later developing psychotic illness, including schizophrenia
- > around 10% of users become dependent and experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop. They could lose their appetite, become tired and irritable, experience mood swings and have difficulty sleeping
- > people who smoke it with tobacco can also become addicted to nicotine



"I smoked cannabis every day for three years. At first, it was great. I enjoyed just chilling out with my mates and having a laugh. But after a while we were just smoking out of habit and it wasn't even that much fun. I got quite paranoid and I'd just sit there, not saying a word. I became very anti social. But I still carried on doing it. Draw was running my life, costing me a fortune and it never occurred to me I had a problem.

One day, I realised I wasn't doing much at all except wasting my money on something that was doing my head in. I made a decision to give up because I hated what it was doing to me. It wasn't easy 'cos I was hooked on the tobacco as well, but I'm glad I did it."

**Sol, 18**



# cannabis and mental health

## Cannabis use has been linked to mental health problems in a number of ways.

When they are stoned, people can feel **anxious or paranoid**.

They may also experience **memory loss or panic attacks**.

Cannabis use, particularly **heavy use**, can send some people into an immediate acute paranoid or psychotic state.

They might **hallucinate** (see things that aren't really there), **hear voices, have delusions** (believe things that aren't true) or **behave very strangely**. They may require hospital treatment and medication for a few days.

Some people use cannabis because they have a mental health problem, to 'block out' their feelings or make themselves feel better.

**However, there is strong evidence that cannabis can actually make an existing mental health problem worse.**

It is also possible that regular use may contribute to the risk of later developing psychotic illnesses, including schizophrenia. It is not currently known whether the increased availability of stronger forms of cannabis will increase this risk.

# spotting the signs

## Signs of use

- > **bloodshot eyes** and a dry mouth
- > **becoming withdrawn** or losing interest in personal hygiene or appearance
- > **leaving paraphernalia around the house** such as torn cigarette packets, cigarette papers or pipes
- > **brown or burnt fingertips**

Sometimes there may not be any clear signs that someone is using cannabis. And sometimes the things you think are signs might be to do with something else completely. Some 'signs' are just those of a teenager growing up.

## Signs of dependency

- > When people are dependent, they may become anxious and irritable without the drug. There are other signs too. These are also often linked to an addiction to smoking nicotine.
- > **using larger amounts** than before or doing it more often
- > **trying to give up**, but failing
- > **losing interest** in other activities and in people who aren't using cannabis themselves
- > **getting physical withdrawal symptoms** when trying to give up. This can also include withdrawal from nicotine if the cannabis was usually smoked with tobacco

**If you are worried about someone you know, see page 14 for help.**

# cannabis and the law

**Cannabis is illegal. It's a Class B drug and if someone is caught with even a small amount, the police will always take action.**

## 1. Possession

If someone is caught with cannabis, they can be arrested – even if it is the first time that they have been caught. What the police do will depend on the circumstances and how old the person is.

### **Adults who are 18 and over**

The agreed police response is to:

- > Give a cannabis warning if it is the first time the offender has been caught with cannabis.
- > Give a Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND) if it is the second time the offender has been caught with cannabis. This is an on-the-spot fine of £80. If the fine is paid, there will be no record of criminal conviction. However, PNDs will be logged on the Police National Computer and may be disclosed as part of an enhanced criminal records check, if it is thought relevant.
- > Arrest offenders if it is the third or more time they have been caught with cannabis.



## **Young people between 10 and 17**

The agreed police response is to:

- > Give a reprimand if it is the first time the young person has been caught with cannabis.
- > Give a final warning and refer the young person to a Youth Offending Team if it is the second time they have been caught with cannabis.
- > Arrest them if it is the third or more time they have been caught with cannabis.

If the person is under 18, their parent or guardian will also be contacted. They can also be referred to a Youth Offending Team at any stage

**The maximum penalty for possession is five years in prison plus an unlimited fine.**

## **2. Supply**

Dealing is a very serious offence.

In the eyes of the law, this includes giving drugs to friends.

People who grow cannabis in their homes or carry large amounts also risk being charged with intent to supply.

**The maximum penalty for supply is 14 years in prison plus an unlimited fine.**

### **Did you know?**

You might face criminal charges if your child produces, gives away or sells illegal drugs in your home. Allowing your child to use cannabis in your home is also illegal.

# worried?

**If you're worried about someone's cannabis use, the best starting point is to talk to them. But first...**

**1. Get the facts**

The conversation will go better if you are confident about what you're saying

**2. Think about your reaction**

If they say they have used cannabis, how will you feel?

**3. Get the timing right**

Pick a time when you are both calm and ready to talk

**4. Look for openings**

Such as stories in the media or storylines on TV

**5. Avoid asking 'why?'**

This puts people on the defensive. Ask questions that start with how, when, what or where



## **6. Focus on them, not the drugs**

You need to explain how their behaviour is affecting you and your family and what will happen if they carry on

## **7. Stick by them**

Listen to them and how they say they feel. Make some suggestions, but don't nag. If they say they want help, offer to help them find it

**And you can always talk to FRANK in confidence on 0800 77 66 00 if you have any questions.**

"I smoked most nights but I couldn't remember things. When I decided to quit I made some rules to help me start to cut down, like I'd only smoke on a Saturday night. I kept busy and when I fancied a joint, I took my dog out. Sounds stupid but it worked."

**Carly, 18**





# know your stuff

## **Blazing**

Smoking a joint – particularly inhaling and then exhaling a lot of smoke

## **Blunt**

A hollowed-out cigar re-packed with marijuana

## **Bong**

A water-cooled pipe made of a vertical tube partly filled with liquid and a smaller tube with a mouthpiece at the end. Used to smoke cannabis

## **Brick**

One kilogram of marijuana

## **Bud**

The flowers of the female marijuana plant, fresh or dried

## **Eighth**

An eighth of an ounce – a standard quantity of cannabis. Other quantities include a sixteenth or half (ounce)

## **Hookah**

A traditional Middle Eastern pipe, sometimes used to smoke cannabis

## **Joint**

A cannabis cigarette. Often the cannabis is mixed with tobacco. Goes by many other names, for example reefer or spliff

## **Munchies**

Getting the 'munchies' is a slang term for craving food, often as a result of using cannabis

## **Roach**

A piece of cardboard rolled up and placed at the butt of a joint to act as a filter

## **Stoned**

The word used to describe the way you feel after using cannabis. Also known as wasted or zonked

## **Token**

To inhale or puff on a joint

## **Whitey**

Or 'throwing a whitey', means going pale after using cannabis and experiencing nausea or vomiting

# help and advice

If you've got questions or you're worried about someone else, call FRANK on **0800 77 66 00** 24 hours a day for friendly, confidential advice and information. Or go to **talktofrank.com**

## Useful organisations

### Adfam

Support materials for people with a family member who takes drugs. Can help you find local support groups.  
email: [admin@adfam.org.uk](mailto:admin@adfam.org.uk)  
[www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)

### Release

Provides expert advice and information on drugs, the law and human rights.  
tel: 0845 4500 215  
email: [ask@release.org.uk](mailto:ask@release.org.uk)  
[www.release.org.uk](http://www.release.org.uk)

### Parentline Plus

Support and information for anyone parenting a child.  
tel: 0808 800 2222  
[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)



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