

# THE BASICS

## Cannabis (Marijuana, Hashish, Hash Oil)

### What it is:

Cannabis is a plant that contains the drug THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol)

### Forms:

- **Marijuana** (pot, weed, grass, dope) - The dried leaves and flowers of the plant.
- **Hashish** (hash) - A dried resin from the top of the plant. Often brown or black and “chunky” looking.
- **Hash oil** - It is sticky oil made from hashish. Can be brown, black, red or clear. It is often put in small bottles or caps.

### Do you know?

- Cannabis is much stronger than it was even just a decade ago. Plants are bred to have more THC.
- Although cannabis is typically smoked, it can also be eaten.
- After smoking, a person can feel the effects of THC within a few minutes and they usually last 3-4 hours. When eaten, a person may not feel the effects for an hour or more, but they can last more than 24 hours.
- The body's fat cells store THC for a long time after stopping use - up to 6 weeks for regular daily users.
- Smoke from a marijuana cigarette contains some of the same chemicals found in tobacco smoke that are known to cause cancer.



### Is it legal?

- Cannabis is an illegal recreational drug in Canada. It is against the law to possess any amount.
- The medical use of marijuana is permitted in Canada in specific cases. A permit is required in order to possess or use marijuana for medical purposes.

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## Effects

### Short-Term:

While using, a person may experience the following:

- Red eyes and lowered skin temperature
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Drowsiness, slowed speech
- Slow reaction time and poor coordination
- Concentration and memory problems
- Feelings of pleasure and desire to laugh
- Hearing, seeing, and feeling things differently (e.g., colours may seem brighter, emotions more intense)
- A strong desire for food
- A feeling that time is going slowly or quickly
- A feeling of being separated from reality and seeing or hearing things that aren't really there
- Panicky feelings, or paranoia (feeling scared or suspicious for no reason)
- Dizziness or fainting with large, repeat doses



### Long-Term:

After heavy use over a long period of time, a person may experience the following:

- Short-term memory problems
- Difficulty learning and problem solving
- Breathing problems, frequent cough, lung damage, increased risk of cancer
- Immune system problems (the body is unable to fight off infections as easily)
- Low blood pressure
- Some research suggests regular use harms the reproductive system, leading to low sperm counts, impotence in men, and irregular menstrual cycles (periods) in women
- Fearfulness and anxiety are common after high doses
- Decreased motivation, low energy and loss of interest in life

## Tolerance and Dependence

- People who use cannabis regularly can develop a tolerance, so more is needed to get the same effect.
- Users can become psychologically dependent (feel they need the drug).
- Physical dependence (the body needs the drug) does occur, especially with regular use.



### REMEMBER

A person's experience with any drug can vary. Some things that may affect the experience: the amount and strength of the drug, the setting, a person's mood and expectations before taking the drug, gender, overall health, past experience with the drug, and whether more than one drug is being used at the same time. Using alcohol and other drugs at the same time can be dangerous.

## Withdrawal Symptoms

- Physical withdrawal symptoms can include trouble sleeping, poor temper, loss of appetite, restlessness, anxiety, sweating, chills and mild nausea.
- Most withdrawal symptoms end after two weeks, though bad temper and physical tension can last much longer.
- Overdosing on cannabis is unlikely as long as it has not been mixed with other drugs

## Other Risks

- Frequent cannabis users, especially those with a family history of mental health problems, are at increased risk for certain mental health conditions.
- People with heart disease or high blood pressure risk complications when using.
- In certain cases, use may trigger a psychotic episode (a condition in which the person does not know what is real and what is not real).
- People can put themselves and others in risky situations when using these drugs such as driving while high, having unprotected sex or taking other unsafe actions that could harm themselves or others.
- Drug use can also lead to bad decision-making and embarrassing actions that you might regret.
- May be harmful to a developing baby (low birth weight, pre-mature birth, possible learning disabilities)
- Drug use during one's youth (a time of important brain development) may affect physical, mental, and emotional development.

## We're Here For You

If alcohol, drugs or gambling are causing problems for you or someone you know, call us at **1-866-638-2561 (toll free)** for information about our programs and services.



\* Contact us if you would like the sources for this info sheet or more information on the subject.

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