



CANNABIS

Factsheet

Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK.

It is a class B drug which means Possession - max 5 years in prison; Supply – max 14 years in prison.

Short term effects

The effects of cannabis vary from person to person depending on how they are feeling, who they are with, where they are, and the type/strength of the cannabis.

They may feel relaxed, happy, giggly, chatty, lazy, unmotivated, anxious or paranoid.

Long term effects

The brain is still developing in teens and regular cannabis use can interfere with how brain connections are formed.

Studies show that if you smoke cannabis in your teens you may risk developing a psychotic illness when you are older, especially if others in your family have a mental health diagnosis.

If you have an existing mental health problem you may feel that using cannabis makes this feel better, but evidence shows it can actually make mental health issues worse.

Cannabis can affect short term memory and the ability to concentrate and learn, so you may struggle to do as well in school, especially during exams.

There is risk of lung disease and cancer especially if you also use tobacco when smoking cannabis.

Cannabis use increases heart rate and blood pressure is affected, so this may have implications especially if you already have circulatory problems.

Regular cannabis use may reduce sperm count in males and affect ovulation in females.

You may become disinterested in doing things you previously enjoyed and stop seeing friends who don't use cannabis.

You may get into debt and be encouraged to do things that put you at risk to pay off the debt or to fund your drug use.

If you use cannabis regularly you may become reliant on it and find it difficult to stop using, you may experience mood swings, sweat and struggle to eat and sleep.

What is Cannabis?

Cannabis comes from a plant. The cannabis plant contains numerous chemicals, one of these is called tetrahydrocannabinol, more commonly known as THC. When someone uses cannabis it very subtly alters their reality, as cannabis has hallucinogenic properties. This effect is dependent on the amount of THC in the cannabis. Although you can't tell just by looking how much THC is present, strains such as skunk have been bred to have higher levels.

Cannabis can be smoked by mixing with tobacco or on its own in zoots/spliffs, pipes, bongs, vapes, eaten in cakes or cookies or made into tea. When smoked the effects are experienced quite quickly however when eaten it may take an hour for the effects to be felt.

- Always use a small amount of cannabis at first in case it is stronger than you are used to or has had something dangerous added to it to `bulk it up`.
- Don't breathe the smoke in too deeply, this will only damage lungs and won't increase the effect.
- Use somewhere you feel safe and with people you trust.

How can we help?

MK Young Peoples Drug and Alcohol Service offer support, information and advice to anyone 18 and under who:

- Is affected by someone else's drug/alcohol use
- Would like support to reduce or stop their own drug or alcohol use
- Would like to learn more about different substances so that they can make more informed choices

Email – ypdaservice@milton-keynes.gov.uk