



headspace

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

Cannabis



Cannabis AKA marijuana, pot, dope, grass, hash, ganja, hashish, choof, hemp, herb, skunk, smoke, spliff, weed.

What is it?

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug in Australia and it comes in a number of different forms. For example, pot is the dried leaves and flowers of the cannabis plant and looks like tightly-packed dried herbs, and hash is a black-brown solid material

made from the resin of the plant. Cannabis is usually mixed with tobacco and smoked in joints. It can also be smoked in bongos or pipes, baked into food (e.g. cakes and cookies) or sometimes drunk as a brew.



There is no "safe way" to use cannabis, however, if you are choosing to use, it is important that you use as safely as possible.

What does it do?

Cannabis contains a chemical called Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which moves from the bloodstream into the brain. THC is a hallucinogenic, meaning that it changes the way that you see reality. How it affects you depends on how much you use, how strong it is, how you took it, how you are feeling, who you are with and whether you have mixed it with any other drugs or alcohol.



How long being "stoned" lasts, depends on how you used cannabis and how strong it was (e.g. if you ate it, you might stay stoned for a lot longer than if you smoked it). Usually when people smoke cannabis, they stay stoned for two to four hours. If you eat cannabis, the reaction can take up to an hour to come on but it might then last for six or more hours.

The effects of cannabis



Some effects of cannabis or being "stoned" are feeling chilled out, relaxed and happy, becoming talkative and laughing a lot and experiencing hunger or food cravings (known as "the munchies"). Some of the not-so-good effects can include feeling sick, your heart rate speeding up, a change in the way you experience sensations (colours and sounds), poor concentration, anxiety and panic, suspicion, paranoia and poor coordination which can affect driving and other activities.

Cannabis



Cannabis and your mental health

People usually use cannabis because they want to feel good, and in most cases they do. However if you already have a mental health problem, you might find that cannabis makes you feel worse.

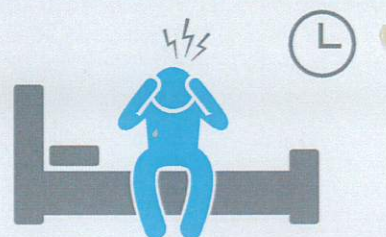
Sometime cannabis can make feelings of anxiety, panic or paranoia more intense. Young people who use cannabis are at risk of developing mental health problems, such as psychosis. Psychosis is when you start to believe strange



things or see and hear things that aren't there. The risk of developing psychosis can be even higher if you start using cannabis when you are young, or if other people in your family have had mental health problems.

What happens if I stop using?

If you use cannabis for a long time you might become dependent and then find it hard to stop. If you are trying to cut down or stop using cannabis after using it for a while, you might experience withdrawal symptoms. These can include cravings, an upset tummy, not wanting to eat, problems sleeping and sometimes feeling angry, irritable and restless. Withdrawals usually last around a week, although problems with sleep may go for longer.



Staying safe

If you are going to use cannabis, there will always be the risk of bad things happening. You can reduce some of this risk by:



Going low, going slow.
Just use a bit at a time and wait to see what it feels like.



Eating cannabis (in cakes or cookies) rather than smoking it. Be aware that it's easy to have too much, so start with a small amount and wait up to an hour to see how strong it is.



Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol. Things can get out of control quickly.



Not driving or doing anything that requires coordination after you've used.



Only using with people you trust. It's good if someone in your group isn't using to keep an eye on you. Keep an eye on your mates too.



Having cannabis free days. Avoid using if you have school, uni or work the next day.



Calling an ambulance (000) if things get bad.

Getting help

If your cannabis use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



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For more information, to find your nearest **headspace** centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)