

- Substantial evidence from animal research and a growing number of studies in humans indicate that marijuana exposure during development can cause long-term or possibly permanent adverse changes in the brain.
- Much like tobacco smoke, marijuana smoke is made up of a variety of toxic chemicals that can irritate your bronchial passages and lungs. If you're a regular smoker, you're more likely to wheeze, cough and produce phlegm. You're also at increased risk of bronchitis and lung infections.
- Marijuana may aggravate existing respiratory illnesses like asthma and cystic fibrosis. Marijuana smoke contains carcinogens. It has the potential to elevate your risk of developing lung cancer.
- Circulatory System THC moves from your lungs into your bloodstream and throughout your body. Within minutes, your heart rate may increase by 20-50 beats per minute, according to the NIDA. That rapid heartbeat can continue for up to three hours. For people with heart disease, this faster heartbeat could raise the risk of heart attack.
- In people who have schizophrenia, marijuana can make symptoms worse. When you come down from the high, you may be tired or feel a bit depressed.

- One of the telltale signs of recent marijuana use is bloodshot eyes. They look red because marijuana causes blood vessels in the eyes to expand or dilate.
- Central Nervous System: When you inhale marijuana smoke into your lungs, it doesn't take long for THC to enter your bloodstream. From there, it is quickly transported to your brain and the rest of your organs
- When you get marijuana from food or drink, it is absorbed a little more slowly. THC triggers your brain to release large amounts of dopamine, a naturally occurring "feel good" chemical. That's what gives you a pleasant "high." It may heighten your sensory perception, as well as your perception of time.
- In the hippocampus, THC changes the way you process information, so your judgment may be impaired. It may also be difficult to form new memories when you're high. Changes also take place in the cerebellum and basal ganglia, upsetting your balance, coordination, and reflex response.
- All those changes mean that it's not safe to drive. Very large doses of marijuana or high concentrations of THC can cause hallucinations or delusions. According to the NIDA, there may be an association between marijuana use and some mental health problems like depression and anxiety.
- In some people, marijuana can cause anxiety. About 9% of marijuana users develop an addiction, according to the NIDA.



## Marijuana Risk & Realities

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## ***FAST FACTS:***

- Marijuana smoke contains **50 to 70% more cancer causing substances than tobacco smoke.**
- One major research study reported that a single cannabis joint could cause as much damage to the lungs as up to **five regular cigarettes smoked one after another.** Long-time joint smokers often suffer from bronchitis, an inflammation of the respiratory tract.
- A number of studies have shown a connection between **continued marijuana use and psychosis.** The drug can affect more than your physical health. Studies in Australia in 2008 linked years of heavy marijuana use to **brain abnormalities.**



- Marijuana changes the structure of **sperm cells, deforming them.** Thus, even small amounts of marijuana can cause temporary sterility in men. Marijuana use can upset a woman's menstrual cycle.
- In young people whose brains are not yet fully developed, marijuana can have a lasting impact on thinking and memory skills.
- Symptoms of withdrawal may include irritability, insomnia and loss of appetite.

Studies show that the **mental functions** of people who have smoked a lot of marijuana tend to be diminished. The THC in cannabis disrupts nerve cells in the brain affecting memory.

Cannabis is one of the few drugs which **causes abnormal cell division** which leads to severe **hereditary defects.**



A pregnant woman who regularly smokes marijuana or hashish may give birth prematurely to an undersized, underweight baby. Over the last 10 years, many **children of marijuana users have been born with reduced initiative and lessened abilities to concentrate and pursue life goals.** Studies also suggest abnormalities and increased risk of leukemia in children.

If you use marijuana when pregnant, it can affect the brain of your unborn baby. Your child may be more prone to trouble with memory, concentration and problem-solving skills. THC can lower pressure in the eyes, which can ease symptoms of glaucoma for a few hours.

## **SHORT-TERM EFFECTS**

- Sensory distortion
- Panic
- Anxiety
- Poor coordination of movement
- Lowered reaction time
- After an initial “up”, the user feels sleepy or depressed
- Increased heartbeat (and risk of a heart attack)

## **LONG-TERM EFFECTS**

- Reduced resistance to common illnesses (colds, bronchitis, etc.)
- Suppression of the immune system
- Growth disorders
- Increase of abnormally structured cells in the body
- Reduction of male sex hormones
- Rapid destruction of lung fibers and lesions (injuries) to the brain could be permanent
- Reduced sexual capacity
- Study difficulties: reduced ability to learn and retain information
- Apathy, drowsiness, lack of motivation
- Personality and mood changes
- Inability to understand things clearly