

# 5 Questions About Weed Answered

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**AKA** marijuana, cannabis, pot, bud,  
dank, chronic, herb, grass, green, kush,  
Mary Jane, skunk, 420 or reefer  
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## 01. What is cannabis?

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Cannabis is the scientific name for a family of plants commonly known as **marijuana**, **pot** or **weed**. You might have heard other names too, like bud, dank, grass, green, kush, Mary Jane, skunk or reefer.

**There are many reasons why people might use cannabis. Like caffeine, prescription drugs, and alcohol, cannabis use can be both beneficial and harmful.**

Some people use cannabis for its **therapeutic** effects, such as relief from pain or nausea.

Cannabis can also be **psychoactive**, which means that it can change the way that a person thinks, acts or feels – in other words, it can make you feel ‘high’.



## 02. How does weed make you feel?

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Cannabis affects people in very different ways. You may feel relaxed, lively, talkative, giggly, and/or even euphoric. At the same time, you may also feel paranoid, anxious, afraid, and/or confused.

**Generally, new users feel the effects more intensely than experienced users.**

**How cannabis affects you depends on**

- » How much you use
- » How often and how long you've used it
- » Whether you smoke, vape or eat it
- » Your mood and expectations, who you're with, and the space you're in
- » Your age
- » Your physical and mental health
- » Whether you've consumed alcohol or other drugs

### 03. How can I use more safely?

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**Try to delay** when you start using cannabis, especially if you're under 16.



Avoid using if you or family members have a **history of psychosis or substance use**, or if you're pregnant.



**Choose low-strength products** – those with low THC and/or high CBD content.



**Stay away from synthetic cannabis** products, such as K2 or Spice.



Use cannabis in ways that don't involve smoking – **choose less risky ways of using** like vaping or edibles.



If you do smoke, **avoid deep inhalation or breath-holding**.



**Occasional use**, such as one day per week or less, is better than regular use.



**Don't drive** while impaired by cannabis. Wait at least 6 hours after using.



**Your actions add up.** The more risks you take, the more likely you are to harm your health.



**Not using cannabis at all** is still the best way to protect your health.

## 04. How can it affect my health?

Like other drugs, cannabis use can affect your health. These risks are higher for people who start using at a young age, and people who use often (daily or near daily).

### SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

- » Can slow you down, making it harder to learn and remember things
- » Affects mood and emotions
- » Can make you feel hungry and/or thirsty
- » Can trigger a psychotic episode (not knowing what is real, feeling paranoid, and, in some cases, having hallucinations)

### LONGER TERM EFFECTS OF REGULAR USE

- » Hurts the lungs and makes it hard to breathe
- » Affects mental health – early and frequent use over a long period of time can contribute to anxiety, depression, psychosis, and/or schizophrenia
- » May lead to addiction

## 05. How do people use cannabis?



### Smoke it

Dry herb in a joint, spliff, blunt, pipe, bong. Oil, wax or shatter that is heated and inhaled (dabbing).



### Vape it

Vaporizer or e-cigarette.



### Eat or drink it

Edibles including tea, brownies, and candies, or an alcohol-based extract called a tincture, on its own or added to food or drinks.

## The way you choose to use cannabis determines when you first feel the effects and how long the effects last.

For example, if you smoke or vape it, you are likely to feel it soon after. If you eat or drink it, it can take some time to feel the effects.

## And there's more...

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### Can eating raw cannabis make me feel high?

No. You need to apply heat to cannabis to activate the chemical compounds that make you feel high.

### Can I overdose on cannabis?

Consuming large amounts of cannabis is not life-threatening, but it can have negative consequences, such as paranoia, delusion or psychotic episodes.

### Is cannabis addictive?

Most people who use cannabis don't become dependent, but those who use daily or near daily over a long period of time may develop a dependence.

A person may be dependent if they feel like they need to use cannabis just to feel normal and function during the day. People who stop using cannabis after regular use can experience mild feelings of withdrawal.

This brochure draws on work by the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Government of Canada, and Students for Sensible Drug Policy.

