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# Understanding Marijuana Use Problems

You may think marijuana is harmless. But it can cause many health problems. And it may affect how well you learn, think, and remember. If you or a loved one has a problem with marijuana, tell someone you trust. That is the first step in getting help.

## What is marijuana?

Marijuana is a mix of dried flowers and leaves from the hemp plant. Sinsemilla, hashish, and hash oil are stronger forms. Most users smoke marijuana. But sometimes it's made into tea or added to food. The most active part of marijuana is a chemical called THC. How strong the drug is depends on the amount of THC. This article does not include information about synthetic marijuana products. These have different properties.

## What are its effects?

How marijuana affects you depends on many factors. These include the strength of the drug, the setting, your age, and your feelings about it. Some people may use marijuana and feel nothing. Others might feel relaxed and giggly. Time might seem to move slowly. And sights, sounds, and colors may seem more intense.

## What are the risks?

Marijuana has many of the same toxic chemicals as tobacco. But you may breathe in even more of them. This is especially true since marijuana users breathe in deeply. And they hold the smoke in for a longer time. So, long-term use may cause breathing problems. It may also lead to chest colds and diseases, such as pneumonia. Marijuana weakens your immune system. This makes you more likely to get sick. Heavy marijuana use may make it harder to focus your mind. You may not learn as quickly. And you may forget what you've learned. You may develop mental health problems, such as mood disorders and loss of touch with reality (psychosis). Some users may also develop a strong physical and emotional need for the drug (dependence or addiction). Some long-term users also develop a syndrome that causes uncontrollable vomiting and belly pain after they smoke. Chronic daily use has been linked to cognitive impairment and poor school or work performance.

## How is a marijuana use problem treated?

Most often, treatment includes therapy and support systems. Newer programs may focus on helping you stick with treatment. Your healthcare provider can help you learn more. Check online for mental health clinics or drug treatment programs. It's not always easy to stop using marijuana. Many of your friends may still use the drug. Some family members may even smoke it. But if you want to quit, you can succeed.

## To learn more

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Helpline at \[www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline\]\(https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline) or 800-662-HELP (800-662-4357)

[National Institute on Drug Abuse at \[www.drugabuse.gov\]\(https://www.drugabuse.gov\)](https://www.drugabuse.gov)

[Marijuana Anonymous at \[www.marijuana-anonymous.org\]\(https://www.marijuana-anonymous.org\)](https://www.marijuana-anonymous.org)