

# CANNABIS FACT SHEET



## The effects of cannabis

Cannabis (also known as marijuana, weed, pot, dope or grass) is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK.

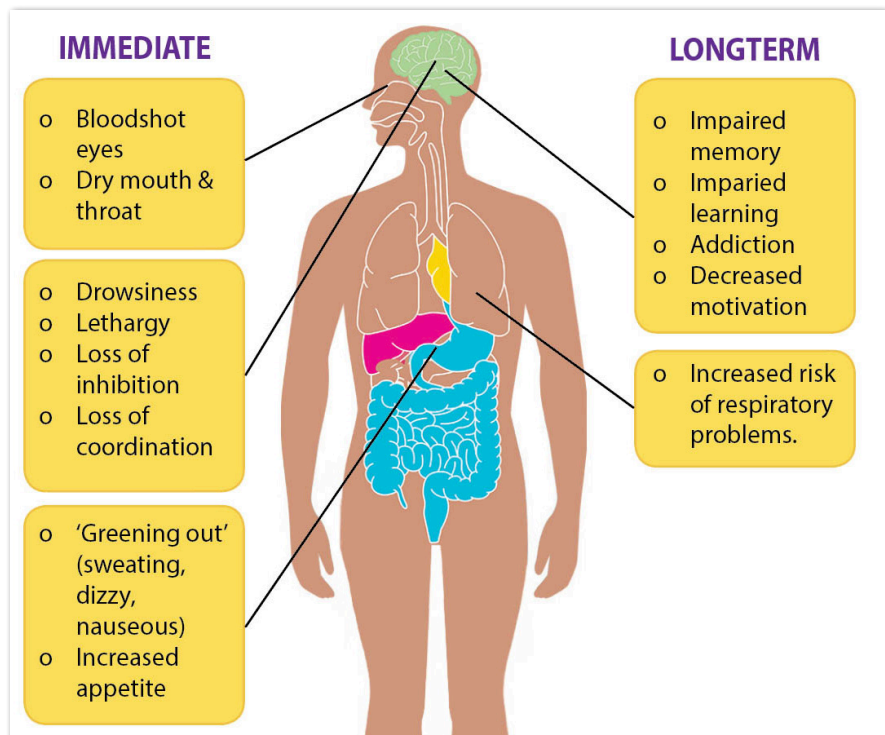
The effects of cannabis vary from person to person:

- a person may feel chilled out, relaxed and happy
- some people get the giggles or become more talkative
- hunger pangs (“the munchies”) are common
- colours may look more intense and music may sound better
- time may feel like it’s slowing down

Cannabis can have other effects too:

- if someone is not used to it, they may feel faint or sick
- it can make people sleepy and lethargic
- it can affect the memory
- it interferes with a person’s ability to drive safely

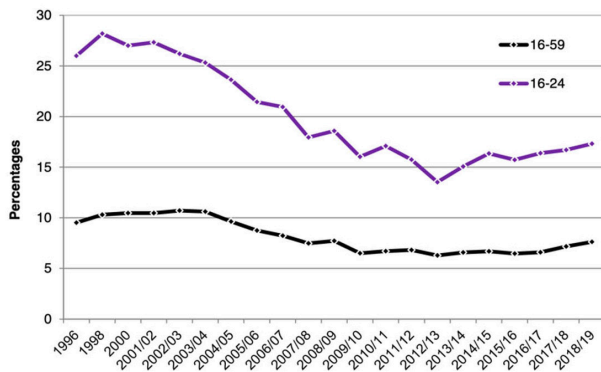
- it makes some people feel confused, anxious or paranoid, and some experience panic attacks and hallucinations (more common with stronger forms of cannabis like skunk or sinsemilla)
- If someone uses cannabis regularly, it can make them demotivated and uninterested in other things going on in their life, such as education or work.
- Long-term use can affect a person’s ability to learn and concentrate.



## How many young people use cannabis?

Only 3 in 10 young adults have tried cannabis and just 7% take cannabis weekly (this has halved since 2002). However street cannabis is getting stronger and more addictive.

Trends in 'any drug' use in the last year among adults, 16 to 59 and 16 to 24-year-olds, 1996 to 2018/19



## The Difference between medicinal cannabis and street cannabis

Medicinal cannabis is high in cannabidiol (CBD) whereas street cannabis is high in the psychoactive tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). CBD and THC don't have the same effects. CBD may help with anxiety, depression, and seizures whereas THC is psychoactive and linked to paranoia, dependency and psychosis.

It is estimated that cannabis is seven times stronger today than it was in the 1970s. For example, 84% of police seizures were high-potency cannabis in 2018 compared to 51% in 2005.

That's why the NHS estimates that 1 in 10 people who use weed will become dependent on it. In addition, those who begin use when under the age of 18 have a one-in-six chance of dependence.

## Using alcohol and cannabis together

Taking alcohol and cannabis together allows the body to absorb the active ingredient tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) faster. This can lead to the cannabis having a much stronger effect than it would normally have.

Alcohol and cannabis are both depressants, so they slow down the nervous system. Their combined effects can interact and cause more negative consequences when taken together, so judgement, reaction time and coordination are affected more.

Cannabis affects basic control functions in the brain, such as nausea and vomiting, and can suppress the body's response to vomit after drinking too much. This could mean an increased risk of alcohol poisoning.

If driving, all it takes is 40 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood (a blood alcohol content of 0.04) and a single joint to feel twice the effects of being over the legal limit to drive.

## Cannabis and the law

Possession of cannabis can lead to five years in prison.

However, if someone has a small amount for personal use, they are more likely to get a cannabis warning for a first offence. These warnings do not show up on criminal record checks, but are recorded on the police database.

Supplying cannabis can be punished with a 14-year jail sentence or an unlimited fine.

## Help and support

Drugwise - [drugwise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CannabisInfographic-1.pdf](https://www.drugwise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CannabisInfographic-1.pdf)

Talk to Frank - [talktofrank.com/drug/cannabis](https://talktofrank.com/drug/cannabis)

NHS - [nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/cannabis-the-facts/](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/cannabis-the-facts/)