



**Cannabis contains a chemical called THC which moves from the bloodstream into the brain. THC is a sedative, leading to relaxation and sleepiness.**

**A.K.A.:** Marijuana, dope, pot, grass, hash, ganja, hashish, hemp, herb, skunk, smoke, spliff, weed, joint and others.

### **Cannabis comes in a number of different forms:**

- Marijuana, grass or weed is the dried leaves of the cannabis plant and looks like tightly-packed dried herbs.
- Hash or hashish oil, which is rare in Australia, can be spread on cigarette paper and smoked.
- Hash is a black-brown solid material made from the resin of the plant.

Cannabis is an illegal drug. If you are caught with even a small amount you can be arrested and it could lead to a criminal record. Each Australian state has different laws and penalties for its use, possession and sale.



### **How is cannabis taken?**

Cannabis is most often mixed with tobacco and smoked as a spliff or a joint. It can also be smoked through a pipe, put into bong, made into tea or mixed into food like cakes and cookies.



### **What are the immediate effects of cannabis?**

Cannabis contains a chemical called THC which moves from the bloodstream into the brain. THC is a sedative, leading to relaxation and sleepiness. It is also hallucinogenic, changing the way that you see reality. Some people feel chilled out, relaxed and happy when using cannabis. Some become talkative and laugh a lot, and some experience hunger or food cravings ('the munchies').

Effects that aren't so good can include:

- Nausea (feeling sick, like you want to vomit)
- Anxiety and panic
- Faster heart rate
- Suspicion and paranoia
- Changed perception of colours, sound and other sensations
- Poor coordination (affecting driving and other risky activities).
- Poor concentration

The effects depend on how much you have used, how strong it is, how you took it, your body size and health, your mood before taking the drug, and whether you have taken any other drugs (including alcohol).



### How can cannabis affect my physical health?

Using cannabis can have some serious long-term effects on your health, including:

- A higher risk of lung cancer and other respiratory illnesses from smoking
- Low energy and poor motivation, which can undermine your achievement at study or work
- Poor memory, concentration and ability to learn
- Low sex drive.



### How can cannabis affect my mental health?

People who use cannabis are more likely to develop mental health problems, especially psychosis. The risk is higher if you start using cannabis at a young age and if other people in your family have had mental health problems. Cannabis can also make symptoms of a mental illness worse.



### What about withdrawal?

You can become dependant on cannabis. If you are trying to reduce or stop cannabis after using it for a while, you might have withdrawal reactions. These can include a craving for the drug, poor appetite, sleep problems, and sometimes anger, irritability and restlessness.

You might also get addicted to nicotine if you roll your spliffs/joints with tobacco.

## Managing your drug use

If you, your family or your friends think your drug use is becoming a problem, then get some help and talk to people about it. Changing your drug use can be hard work, but it will be worth it.

Some people can reduce or stop drug use on their own, but think about talking to a trusted family member, friend, doctor or counsellor.

For more information, and to find out how to get help, visit the headspace website: [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)