

Cannabis Fact Sheet

Common names:

- Marijuana (joint, pot, grass, weed, ganja, reefer, MJ)
- Hashish (hash)
- Hash Oil (oil, honey oil)

Description/Overview

Cannabis is the most widely used of all illicit drugs.

- Cannabis is now considered a separate drug class of its own (past classification as either a depressant or hallucinogen)
- Active ingredient is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)
- Smoked in cigarettes (joints, reefers), cigars (blunts), water pipes (bongs)

Short – Term Effects

- Impaired coordination and balance, rapid heartbeat, dry mouth and throat, and red eyes
- Sensory perception seems enhanced and appetite increases
- Can produce feelings of relaxation, happiness and drowsiness
- If smoked, effects are felt within a few minutes and last for 2 to 4 hours
- At higher doses, hallucinations are possible; can experience fearfulness, anxiety and depression ; may experience panic, terror or paranoia
- In large amounts can trigger underlying mental problems and produce delusions, paranoia and schizophrenia like states

Long – Term Effects

- Contains tar and cancer causing chemicals, thus is associated with lung damage, chronic coughing, lung infections, and lung, neck and head cancer
- Decreased motivation and interest in life, may become less active
- Problems with short term memory, concentration and abstract thinking
- Impaired immune functioning, changes in reproductive hormones and heart problems
- Effects may disappear when use stops, but some last for years

Dependence Potential

- Regular heavy users can develop tolerance (*a need for more of the drug to produce the same effect*)
- Heavy long term use *can* cause dependence
- Can experience cravings for the mood altering effects
- Psychological and physical dependence may occur

Withdrawal

- Loss of appetite, troubled sleep, anxiety, irritability, sweating, anxiety, moodiness, and upset stomach
- Usually lasts less than a week