

# Drug Facts: Marijuana/Cannabis



- Marijuana is a dry, shredded green/brown mix of flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves from the Cannabis sativa plant. The mixture typically is green, brown, or gray in color and may resemble tobacco.
- The effect of marijuana on perception and coordination are responsible for serious impairments in learning, associative processes, and psychomotor behavior (driving abilities).

## What Is Marijuana?

Marijuana is a mind-altering (psychoactive) drug, produced by the Cannabis sativa plant. Marijuana contains over 480 constituents. THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) is believed to be the main ingredient that produces the psychoactive effect.

## What Are Common Street Names?

Common street names include: *Aunt Mary, BC Bud, Blunts, Boom, Chronic, Dope, Gangster, Ganja, Grass, Hash, Herb, Hydro, Indo, Joint, Kif, Mary Jane, Mota, Pot, Reefer, Sinsemilla, Skunk, Smoke, Weed, and Yerba*

## What Does it Look Like?

Marijuana is a dry, shredded green/brown mix of flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves from the Cannabis sativa plant. The mixture typically is green, brown, or gray in color and may resemble tobacco.

## How Is it Abused?

Marijuana is usually smoked as a cigarette (called a joint) or in a pipe or bong. It is also smoked in blunts, which are cigars that have been emptied of tobacco and refilled with marijuana, sometimes in combination with another drug. Marijuana is also mixed with foods or brewed as a tea.

## What Is its Effect on the Mind?

When marijuana is smoked, the THC passes from the lungs and into the bloodstream, which carries the chemical to the organs throughout the body, including the brain. In the brain, the THC connects to specific sites called cannabinoid receptors on nerve cells and influences the activity of those cells. Many of these receptors are found in the parts of the brain that influence pleasure, memory, thought, concentration, sensory and time perception, and coordinated movement.

The short-term effects of marijuana include:

- Memory and learning
- Distorted perception
- Difficulty in thinking and problem-solving
- Loss of coordination

The effect of marijuana on perception and coordination are responsible for serious impairments in learning, associative processes, and psychomotor behavior (driving abilities). Long term, regular use can lead to physical dependence and withdrawal following discontinuation, as well as mental addiction or dependence.

Clinical studies show that the physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects of marijuana vary among individuals and present a list of common responses to cannabinoids, as described in the scientific literature:

- Dizziness, nausea, tachycardia, facial flushing, dry mouth and tremor initially
- Enhanced sensory perception, giving rise to increased appreciation of music, art, and touch
- Time distortions
- Illusions, delusions, and hallucinations are rare except at high doses



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- Impaired judgment, reduced coordination, and ataxia, which can impede driving ability or lead to an increase in risk-taking behavior
- Emotional lability, incongruity of affect, dysphoria, disorganized thinking, inability to converse logically, agitation, paranoia, confusion, restlessness, anxiety, drowsiness, and panic attacks may occur, especially in inexperienced users or in those who have taken a large dose
- Increased appetite and short-term memory impairment are common

Researchers have also found an association between marijuana use and an increased risk of depression, an increased risk and earlier onset of schizophrenia, and other psychotic disorders, especially for teens that have a genetic predisposition.

### What Is its Effect on the Body?

Short-term physical effects from marijuana use may include:

- Sedation
- Blood shot eyes
- Increased heart rate
- Coughing from lung irritation
- Increased appetite
- Decreased blood pressure

Like tobacco smokers, marijuana smokers experience serious health problems such as bronchitis, emphysema, and bronchial asthma. Extended use may cause suppression of the immune system. Because marijuana contains toxins and carcinogens, marijuana smokers increase their risk of cancer of the head, neck, lungs, and respiratory tract.

Withdrawal symptoms also include behavioral signs such as:

- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Sleep difficulties
- Decreased appetite

### What Are its Overdose Effects?

No death from overdose of marijuana has been reported. This is because there are no Endocannabinoid receptors located on the spinal cord which is responsible for respiration. When a substance use-related overdose occurs it is because the chemicals from the substances bind to the spinal cord, slowing breathing until it stops completely.

## Connecticut Resources

Department of Mental Health  
and Addiction Services

[www.ct.gov/dmhas](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas)

[www.drugfreect.org](http://www.drugfreect.org)

## National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services Administration

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

1.800.662.HELP (4357)

National Institute on  
Drug Abuse

[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

