Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
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Drugs a-to-z

Cannabis: Factsheet



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: Cannabis

Tags: pot, hash, marijuana, yarndi, ganja, mull, weed, hash, dope, bush, hydro

Time Allocated: Partial lesson (under 45mins)

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

What is Cannabis?

In Australia, cannabis is also known as grass, pot, dope, weed, joints, mull, hydro, yarndi, ganja, bud, or green.

Cannabis is derived from the plant *Cannabis sativa*. The main active ingredient responsible for the 'high' produced by cannabis is called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol or THC.

Cannabis is produced in three main forms:

- **Cannabis herb** (also known as marijuana) - the dried flowering tops/buds and leaves of the cannabis plant.
- **Cannabis resin** (also known as hashish) - the resin of the cannabis plant.
- **Cannabis oil** (also known as hash oil) - a thick oil obtained from hashish.

While hashish and hash oil contain more THC than marijuana, they are not widely used in Australia. Cannabis is typically smoked and often mixed with tobacco. It is also sometimes added to food and eaten.

How many young people have tried Cannabis?

According to the 2022-2023 Australian secondary schools' survey, 1 in 14 students (7%) aged 12-17 used cannabis in the past month.

Personal Stories

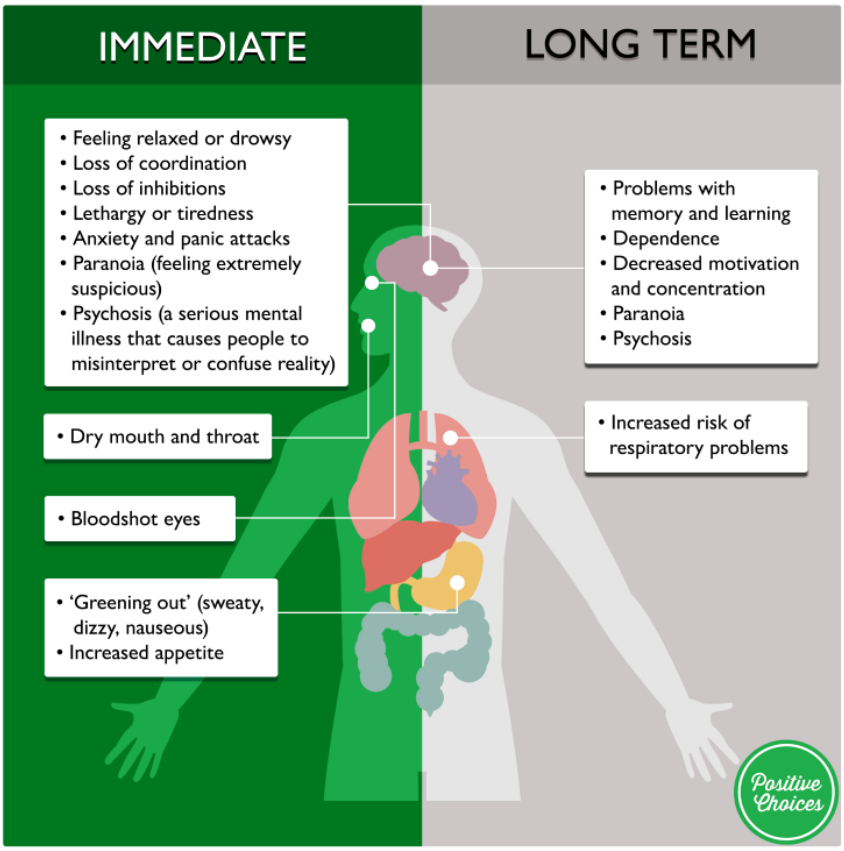
"The last time I had a joint was one of the worst nights of my life. I felt like I wasn't aware of time and that I was losing my mind. My heart was racing and I thought I was going to have a heart attack. It's difficult to explain but it was a truly terrifying experience that has made me never want to touch weed again."
-Thomas, 15

What are the effects of Cannabis?

If smoked, the effects are often felt quickly as THC is rapidly absorbed into the lungs and can enter the bloodstream within minutes.

The effects of cannabis can be immediate or long term, as listed in the table below.

Immediate	Long-term
Increased appetite	Problems with memory and learning
Feeling relaxed or drowsy	Dependence (see glossary)
Loss of co-ordination	Decreased motivation and concentration
Loss of inhibitions	Increased risk of respiratory diseases
Bloodshot eyes	Paranoia
Dryness of the mouth and throat	Psychosis
Lethargy or tiredness	
'Greening out' (feeling sweaty, dizzy, nauseous, vomiting)	
Anxiety and panic attacks	
Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious)	
Psychosis (a serious mental illness that causes people to misinterpret or confuse reality)	



Common Myths

Myth: It is safe to drive after using cannabis.

The effects of cannabis include slower thinking and reflexes, and reduced concentration and co-ordination. As a result, cannabis affects the way you do tasks and activities and can increase the risk of a car crash.

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University.

See Teacher booklet, Parent Booklet or Student Booklet for more information and a list of sources.

- Credit to the Home Office for quotes adapted from Talk to Frank

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