

# The Real Dope on Cannabis Usage



The Association of Food and Drug Officials does not endorse the use of cannabis, including marijuana or hemp; this information is solely intended to empower individuals to make an informed decision about consuming cannabis products. Make sure to familiarize yourself with any applicable laws in your jurisdiction.

**Known Interactions** Although cannabis is not known to have directly caused any deaths,<sup>1</sup> chemicals in the plant may affect the activity of certain drugs,<sup>2-10</sup> including, but not limited to:

- Warfarin<sup>2,3</sup>
- Benzodiazepines<sup>4,5</sup>
- Opioids<sup>4,6-8</sup>
- Alcohol<sup>9,10</sup>



Some of the chemicals found in cannabis, including cannabinoids, affect a group of enzymes in your liver that are responsible for breaking down certain types of drugs. This is one of many reasons why medications can act differently in your body if you are also using cannabis.<sup>2-5</sup>

There may be other drugs that should not be consumed with cannabis, so make sure you speak with your doctor about potential interactions with any medications you are taking.

**Alcohol Usage** Combining cannabis with alcohol can drastically increase the intoxicating effects from either drug. Research has found that even at a blood alcohol level below the legal limit (0.08%) users who consumed cannabis with alcohol were significantly more impaired than people who consumed the drugs individually.<sup>9,10</sup> Use caution if drinking alcohol while consuming cannabis and never get behind the wheel of a car.

**Pregnancy and Breastfeeding** Females who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not consume cannabis. Cannabinoids can pass through the placenta and affect how a fetus would normally develop.<sup>11,12</sup> This may cause complications during pregnancy or contribute to a baby being born small for its gestational age.<sup>11-13</sup> Mothers should also abstain from using cannabis if they are breastfeeding a child. Many of the chemicals in cannabis can be transmitted through breastmilk and may negatively affect how an infant develops.<sup>13,14</sup>



**Children and Young Adults** Children, adolescents, and young adults should not use cannabis unless directed by their healthcare provider for a specific medical condition. Chemicals in cannabis may negatively affect a developing brain and overuse can impair certain developing cognitive functions like verbal learning, memory, attention span, and potentially lead to cannabis use disorder.<sup>13-16</sup>

**Dosage** Consumption of cannabis, especially in new users or with high doses of THC, has caused some people to experience psychological issues which led to accidental injury, self-harming, and even suicide.<sup>17,18</sup>

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If you have a family history of schizophrenia or another serious psychological condition make sure to inform your healthcare provider prior to consuming cannabis; for undetermined reasons cannabis use may increase the risk of developing an underlying psychological disorder.<sup>14-16</sup>

**Side effects** Side effects of cannabis include dry mouth, throat irritation, red/dry/itchy eyes, sensory alterations, sedation, dizziness, lethargy, drowsiness, restlessness, anxiety, and other general changes in mood.<sup>18-20</sup>

Other known side effects which are more serious include:

- Cyclic vomiting<sup>18,21</sup>
- Cardiovascular issues, like changes in heart rate or blood pressure<sup>8,18,20</sup>

If you experience serious side effects as the result of cannabis use, immediately call 911 or visit your nearest hospital if it is a medical emergency. For non-emergencies, contact the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 for expert advice.



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