

# National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Marijuana (Weed, Pot) Facts



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# Marijuana (Weed, Pot) Facts

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Marijuana is a mix of dried, shredded leaves and flowers from the marijuana plant. It is often green, brown, or gray.

There are many ways to use marijuana. People can:

- roll marijuana up and smoke it like a cigarette (called a joint) or a cigar (called a blunt)
- smoke marijuana in a pipe
- mix it in food and eat it or brew it as a tea
- smoke oils from the marijuana plant (this is called “dabbing”)
- use electronic vaporizers (“vape pens”) to “vape”
- marijuana oil

Dabbing and vaping are on the rise.

Marijuana can make you feel silly, relaxed, sleepy, and happy—or nervous and scared. It may change your senses of sight, hearing, and touch.

Marijuana can make it hard to think clearly. In rare cases, some people start seeing things that are not real, called hallucinations.

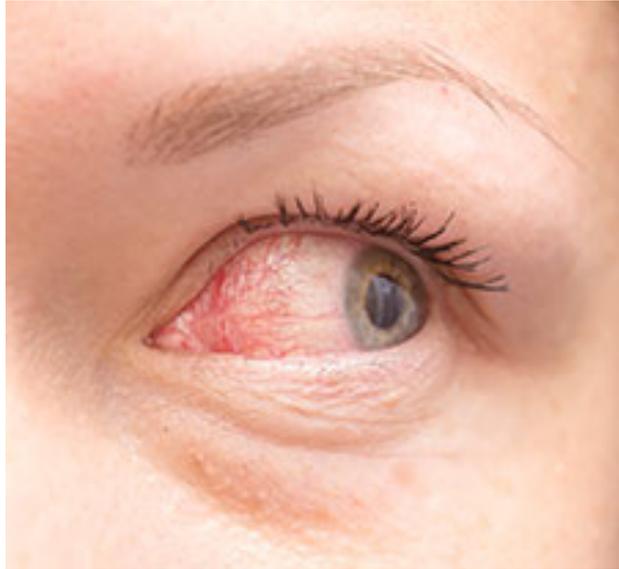
Some slang names for marijuana are:

- Weed
- Pot
- Grass
- Herb
- Boom

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# Signs of Marijuana Use

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Someone taking marijuana can:

- get dizzy
- laugh for no reason
- have red, bloodshot eyes
- forget things that just happened

Marijuana makes you feel like time is slowing down. Minutes can feel like hours. At the same time, everyday sights, sounds, and tastes may seem really interesting or funny.

Marijuana can make you feel very hungry. You want to eat lots of junk food. Some people call this "the munchies."

People who smoke marijuana often smell like it afterwards. Marijuana smells sweeter than cigarette smoke. A person might use incense, cologne, or perfume to try to hide the smell.

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# Effects of Marijuana on Brains and Bodies

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Marijuana smoke can hurt your lungs and cause some of the same coughing and breathing problems faced by people who smoke cigarettes.

These are just some of the problems marijuana can cause:

## Memory Problems

Marijuana makes it hard to remember things that just happened a few minutes ago. That makes it hard to learn in school or to pay attention to your job.

## Heart Problems

Using marijuana makes the heart beat fast and raises your risk of having a heart attack.

## Warning about Lung Illnesses and Deaths

Many people are adding marijuana to the oil they put in vaping devices (e-cigarettes). The lungs are not designed to filter out some oils, and there have been thousands of lung illnesses and dozens of deaths related to vaping marijuana. Sometimes the marijuana is added to the nicotine in a vaping device. The Government has warned against using any vaping products that have THC, one of the main chemicals in marijuana. Here is a [fact sheet](#) with up-to-date information.

People who smoke marijuana can get some of the same coughing and breathing problems as people who smoke cigarettes. Marijuana smoke can hurt your lungs.

## Drugged Driving

Driving when you're high on marijuana is dangerous. It is similar to driving drunk. Your reactions to traffic signs and sounds are slow. It's hard to pay attention to the road. And it's even worse when you're high on marijuana and alcohol at the same time.

## Not Caring about Life

Over time, people who use marijuana can get "burnt out." They don't think about much or do much. They can't concentrate. They don't seem to care about anything but smoking marijuana.

## Overdose

An overdose happens when a person uses enough of a drug to have a very bad reaction or death. People can overdose on marijuana when they take too much of it. This can cause very uncomfortable side effects. In recent years, emergency room doctors are seeing more overdoses in people who eat marijuana edibles (gummies, lollipops and other foods). It takes longer to feel high from edibles than from smoking. Because of this, sometimes people eat too much because they think it isn't working.

Signs of marijuana overdose are:

- a lot of anxiety (feeling very worried)
- panic attacks
- paranoia (thinking people are out to get you)
- hallucinations (seeing things that aren't there)

We do not know of any person who has died from using just marijuana.

## Addiction

Although some people don't know it, you can get addicted to marijuana after using it for a while. Over time, it can change the way your brain works. If you stop using it, your body can get confused and you can start to feel really sick. This makes it hard to stop. This is called addiction.

This is more likely to happen to people who use marijuana every day or who started using it when they were teenagers. They might need to smoke more and more of it to get the same high.

People who are trying to quit using marijuana can:

- be in a bad mood
- feel nervous
- have trouble sleeping

They will feel a strong need to take the drug.

Fortunately, there is counseling that can help someone with a marijuana addiction.

Remember that even if you get treatment, it can be hard to stay off the drug. People who stopped using marijuana can still feel strong cravings for the drug, sometimes even years later. This is normal. This is also why it's important to stay in treatment for as long as your doctor suggests.

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# What is medical marijuana?

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Photo by NIDA

The marijuana plant has chemicals that can help with some health problems. More states are making it legal to use the plant as medicine for certain illnesses. But there isn't enough research to show that the whole plant works to treat or cure these conditions. Also, the U.S. government still doesn't think of marijuana as medicine, so it's still illegal at the national level.

A few medicines have been made as pills and oils. These medicines have chemicals that are like the ones in the marijuana plant, but are not the same type that people usually smoke. They can:

- treat nausea if you have cancer
- make you hungry if you have AIDS and don't feel like eating

Smoking medical marijuana can also hurt your lungs. These and other effects on the brain and body could make marijuana medicine more harmful than helpful.

Another problem with marijuana as a medicine is that the ingredients aren't exactly the same from plant to plant. There's no way to know what you're getting.

Scientists are trying to find ways to make safe medicines from marijuana.

NEXT: [MDMA \(Ecstasy, Molly\) Facts](#)