

RANDOX

TESTING SERVICES

Effects of Cannabis on the Human Body

When you smoke cannabis, there's an almost immediate effect on your brain, sense of perception, and heart rate. There may also be long-term effects. This poster will outline the various effects that cannabis has on the body when consumed.

Effects of Cannabis on the Brain

- Long-term cannabis use can decrease an individual's performance on memory-related tasks and cause a decrease in motivation and interest in everyday activities. Cannabis is also known to intensify symptoms in users with schizophrenia.
- Like most other drugs of abuse, individuals who use cannabis for long periods of time can develop a dependence on it. Signs of dependence in a user include the need to use cannabis to cope with everyday tasks and the experience of cravings and anxiety when cannabis is not available.
- THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) triggers the brain to release large amounts of dopamine, a naturally occurring 'feel good' chemical. In the hippocampus within the central nervous system, THC changes the way you process information, so your judgement may be impaired.
- Changes also take place in the cerebellum and basal ganglia, upsetting balance, co-ordination and reflex response.
- Very large doses of cannabis or high concentrations of THC can cause hallucinations or delusions.
- In young people whose brains are not fully developed cannabis can have a lasting impact on thinking and memory skills.
- According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, about 9% of cannabis users develop an addiction. Symptoms of withdrawal may include irritability, insomnia, and loss of appetite.

Effects of Cannabis on the Heart

- THC moves from the lungs into the bloodstream and throughout the body. Within minutes, heart rate may increase by 20 to 50 beats per minute. That rapid heartbeat can continue for up to three hours. For people with heart disease, this faster heartbeat could raise the risk of heart attack.

Effects of Cannabis on the Eyes

- Cannabis has a few key effects on the eyes. One of the most noticeable occurs shortly after smoking the drug: redness of eyes. THC in cannabis lowers blood pressure which dilates the blood vessels and increases blood flow throughout the body. This causes the blood vessels in the eye to expand causing redness or bloodshot eyes. It can also impact the dilation of the pupils, making them slightly more dilated than usual. One study showed that cannabis used in high doses could have a significant impact on peripheral vision.

Effects of Cannabis on the Mouth, Throat & Esophagus

- Smoking cannabis can cause stinging or burning in both the mouth and the throat.
- Cannabis smoke is made up of a variety of toxic chemicals that can irritate your bronchial passages and lungs. If you're a regular smoker, you are more likely to wheeze, cough and produce phlegm.

Effects of Cannabis on the Lungs

- Cannabis may aggravate existing respiratory illnesses like asthma and cystic fibrosis.
- Cannabis smoke contains carcinogens. It has the potential to elevate your risk of developing lung cancer.

