

Is Marijuana Addictive?

What You Should Know



There's ongoing research to determine whether marijuana use in various forms has the potential to treat a variety of medical conditions. Researchers are also trying to better understand the dose-response relationship, which is the cause-and-effect between exposure and outcome. This is especially important since plant breeding and growing techniques have increased the potency of marijuana's main psychoactive ingredient, THC, from single to double digits in the past 25 years.¹

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), which publishes the official archive of conditions formally documented as mental disorders, recognizes the potential for marijuana addiction in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*.

That being said, many addiction experts, including the U.S. Surgeon General and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), have declared that:

"Addiction is a chronic illness – not a moral failing."

Fast Facts²

- Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal substance in the United States.
- 1 in 10 marijuana users will become addicted.
- Of those who start using marijuana before age 18, 1 in 6 will become addicted.
- The perception of how harmful marijuana use is declining, while the potency of marijuana itself is increasing.
- Today's marijuana has 3X the concentration of THC than it did 25 years ago.
- The higher the concentration of THC, the stronger its effect on the brain.

Can You Overdose on Marijuana?

While it's unlikely someone can die from marijuana, that doesn't mean they can't overdose. Overdose isn't synonymous with death; it means using too much and having a severe reaction.³ Babies and toddlers can become seriously ill through unintentional ingestion of marijuana or marijuana products. Teens and adults who have overdosed report such symptoms as:

- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Panic
- Paranoia
- Rapid Heart Rate
- Severe Nausea
- Vomiting
- Unintentional Secondary Injuries (Motor Vehicle Accidents, Falls, Poisoning)

Marijuana Use Disorder

Problem use can range from dependence to addiction. According to the DSM-5, having at least two of the following signs within a 12-month period may mean the person is using marijuana in a way that is problematic.⁴

1. Using larger amounts of marijuana for longer periods of time than intended.
2. Wanting to cut back or stop but not being able to.
3. Spending a lot of time getting, using, and recovering from the effects of marijuana.
4. Having strong cravings and urges to use.
5. Using it so often that the person cannot get important things done.
6. Experiencing relationship problems yet continuing to use it anyway.
7. Doing less or discontinuing enjoyable activities in favor of using marijuana.
8. Using it in situations that might be considered risky or dangerous.
9. Continuing to use even in spite of having physical or psychological problems caused or worsened by it.
10. Needing more and more marijuana to achieve the same effect.
11. Having withdrawal symptoms that go away with marijuana use.

About This Campaign

Because much of the public conversation surrounding marijuana has been based on anecdotes rather than science, Prevention Action Alliance and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services created this campaign to help people better understand the facts about marijuana and its effects.

If you found this article helpful, we encourage you to share it with others. You can also find other fact sheets about marijuana at: preventionactionalliance.org/marijuana

If you have concerns about your own use of marijuana or a loved one's, and wish to seek help, go to: findtreatment.samhsa.gov/

Contact Us

For more information about today's marijuana, please contact us at:

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About Us

Prevention
Action Alliance



Prevention Action Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit located in Columbus, Ohio. We're dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. Learn more at preventionactionalliance.org.

The mission of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is to provide statewide leadership on the topics of mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery. Learn more about OhioMHAS at mha.ohio.gov.

1. newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/14/is-marijuana-as-safe-as-we-think
2. samhsa.gov/marijuana
3. cdc.gov/marijuana/faqs/overdose-bad-reaction.html
4. verywellmind.com/dsm-5-criteria-for-substance-use-disorders-21926