

# Women and Marijuana



## Marijuana

- Marijuana (e.g., weed, cannabis, hashish, hash, pot) is produced from the Cannabis sativa plant and can be smoked, inhaled as a vapor, or ingested in foods or drinks.
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in marijuana that makes you feel 'high,' but marijuana also contains more than 400 other chemicals.
- Depending on how much THC is in the marijuana, how you use it and how your body responds, the short-term effects of marijuana can last around 1-4 hours. There are different types of marijuana and the effects depend on the amount of THC it contains.
- Using marijuana can produce feelings of euphoria ("being high") and relaxation, changes in perception and sense of time, and increased appetite. Some people also experience anxiety, panic, and mild paranoia.
- Marijuana affects your short-term memory, attention, and motor skills, and slows your reaction time.

## Marijuana and Your Health

- Medical marijuana is prescribed to treat health issues such as nausea and vomiting, chronic pain, and symptoms associated with HIV/AIDS and multiple sclerosis.
- Symptoms of withdrawal from marijuana, if they occur, are usually mild and may include sleep disturbance, irritability and loss of appetite.
- Smoking marijuana can have similar negative health effects as to those of smoking tobacco such as increased risk of cancer.
- Some research suggests that marijuana use can affect ovulation and the length of your menstrual cycle.

## Marijuana and Pregnancy

- Using marijuana while pregnant may affect the fetus. Based on current scientific research, there is no known safe level of marijuana use for pregnant women. Until more is known about the short- and long-term effects of marijuana on fetuses, babies and young children, it is safest to avoid using marijuana while pregnant, while breastfeeding, and around children.
- If you are using marijuana for medical reasons, talk to your health care provider about whether the benefits of the using marijuana for medical purposes outweigh the potential risks to you and your fetus.
- If you have problems stopping or reducing your recreational marijuana use while pregnant, talk to your health care provider about support and services in your community that can help you.
- When you are pregnant, whenever possible, avoid being in a room with people who are smoking marijuana.
- Some women are interested in using marijuana during pregnancy to treat nausea or 'morning sickness'. To date, there has been no research showing that marijuana can be helpful. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about this.
- Babies born to mothers who use marijuana during pregnancy are more likely to be born smaller than other babies and have low birth weight. Low-birth-weight babies are more likely to have health problems as they grow.
- Scientists are still learning about the long-term effects of marijuana use during pregnancy on children and youth. Some research shows that marijuana use during pregnancy can affect childrens' behaviour (such as having attention problems and being hyperactive), brain development (such as having problems with memory or learning at school); and the likelihood that they will use marijuana and other drugs as a teenager.

**Until more is known about the short and long-term effects of marijuana on fetuses, babies and young children, it is safest to avoid using marijuana while pregnant.**



# Marijuana and Breastfeeding

- Scientists are still learning about whether marijuana in breast milk can affect babies in the long-term. It is best not to use marijuana while breastfeeding as it is passed on to babies through breast milk and can be found in their feces (poop).
- Babies who have been exposed to marijuana through breast milk may become drowsy and have a hard time latching properly.
- Marijuana can affect early brain development which may have possible long-term effects related to thinking, emotional well-being, and behaviour in children and youth.

# Marijuana and Parenting

- Marijuana use may affect your ability to safely take care of your baby.
- Some types of marijuana can make people feel very sleepy and can make them sleep more deeply.
- Second-hand marijuana smoke can cause some of the same health problems for your children as second-hand tobacco smoke. Smoke away from your children and outside of the house.
- Keep marijuana in a safe place where your children cannot reach it. Marijuana in food products, such as cookies and brownies, can be especially tempting to curious children.
- If your child eats or drinks marijuana by accident, seek medical attention right away. Your child might have problems walking or sitting up and may get very sleepy or act confused. Serious effects of marijuana on children are less common, but can include problems with breathing, seizures and comas.

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