

**FACT SHEET**

# Cannabis

## WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis is a naturally occurring drug, made from parts of the cannabis plant.

It is usually smoked with tobacco as a 'joint' or via a pipe or bong. It can also be eaten in cakes or cookies and is sometimes drunk as tea.

Other names for cannabis include; pot, ganja, spliff, weed, herb, soap and gear.



## TYPES OF CANNABIS

There are three main ways that cannabis is prepared for use: grass, resin and oil.

Grass, also known as weed, refers to the dried leaves, stems and flowering tops of the plant. It often looks like tightly packed herbs.

Resin, also known as hash, is in solid form, made from compressing parts of the cannabis plant.

Cannabis oil is a sticky, dark substance that is extracted from the cannabis plant.

**In the UK, cannabis is an illegal, Class B controlled Drug, under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971).**

This means that it is illegal to cultivate, produce, supply or possess the drug.

If someone is having a bad reaction, keep them calm and get them home safely. Find out exactly what was taken, and if any other substances have been used, call 999 for medical help.

Be honest with emergency services about what has been taken. This will mean that treatment can be given more quickly.

If someone you know has difficulties with the use of cannabis, please seek specialist help.

Skunk was originally a cross (hybrid) between two different types of cannabis plant, and is characterised by being grown indoors, using special lights and techniques. Skunk is also the term used by the press and police to describe particularly strong varieties of cannabis.

The main active ingredient in any type of cannabis is called THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol).

## WHAT ABOUT SYNTHETIC CANNABIS?

Synthetic cannabis bears no resemblance to the plant versions of cannabis. It is a man-made chemical version of active ingredient, THC, and is then sprayed, or glued, onto other substances.

There are reports of synthetic cannabis being much stronger than traditional cannabis.

## SIDE EFFECTS OF USE

Cannabis can make users feel relaxed, happy and chilled out. It can make people talkative or give them the giggles.

The **hallucinogenic effects** of cannabis can make people have altered perceptions and heightened senses.

It can also make people hungry, sometimes known as "the munchies".

Some people may feel **paranoid** after using cannabis, and it can increase feelings of **anxiety**.

Some people will feel light-headed and sick after one use.

**Cannabis depresses the central nervous system**, which means it can have an effect on physical co-ordination, reaction times and balance.

Some of the longer term effects of cannabis use include:

- Reduction in concentration and the ability to learn
- Impaired memory
- Negative mental health impacts (increased anxiety and paranoia)
- Respiratory illness, such as bronchitis or lung cancer
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure

There are also reports that frequent cannabis use can affect fertility levels in both men and women.