

MYTHS vs. FACTS

~ Cannabis/Marijuana ~

MYTH: Marijuana is natural, so must be good for you.

FACT: Marijuana contains over 460 chemicals and 3 times more tar than cigarettes. Dried marijuana contains over 400 chemicals, including many that are found in cigarettes or have been shown to cause cancer. Marijuana is typically inhaled longer and deeper than when smoking a cigarette, and is burned at a hotter temperature. As a result, there is approximately 5x as much carbon monoxide, 3x the tar and the body absorbs 33% more tar than a cigarette. (Alcohol & Drug Abuse Institute, 2013).

MYTH: Marijuana is not addictive.

FACT: THC is psychologically and physically addictive. Research over the last decade indicates that marijuana can be psychologically and physically addictive. People who use marijuana frequently often report irritability, mood and sleep difficulties, decreased appetite, cravings, restlessness, and/or various forms of physical discomfort after reducing their use or quitting. (National Institute on Drug Abuse NIDA, June 2018).

MYTH: Smoking a little bit of marijuana is harmless.

FACT: Psychosis is linked with smoking cannabis with high levels of THC. Cannabis with high levels of THC and low levels of CBD is associated with an increased risk for psychosis, especially in individuals with genetic predisposition. Some of the effects of cannabis use resemble the symptoms of psychosis (ie. Anxiety, paranoia, delusions); generally, these effects wear off with the high. However, a small proportion of the general population is more vulnerable to the effects of cannabis and may develop long-lasting psychosis (Here to Help, BC Mental Health & Addictions Journal).

MYTH: After October 17, 2018, any Canadian can possess 60-90 joints in a public place.

FACT: The Cannabis Act allows adult users to possess 30 grams of dry cannabis in a public place; and typically a joint consists of 0.3-0.6 grams of cannabis which equals 60-90 joints. However, youth under the age of 19 are prohibited to carry any amount of cannabis.

MYTH: Medical marijuana has the same level of THC as street-level marijuana.

FACT: THC content in cannabis found on the illicit market in Canada ranges from 1-30%, whereas medical marijuana provided by Health Canada is comprised of the mature flowering heads of female plants and contains $12.5 \pm 2\%$ total THC (Health Canada).

MYTH: More kids enter treatment with a primary diagnosis of cocaine dependence than for all other illegal drugs combined.

FACT: More kids enter treatment with a primary diagnosis of marijuana dependence than for all other illegal drugs combined.

MYTH: Within 5-7 days cannabis is no longer detectable in drug tests.

FACT: The effects of cannabis can last for 3 weeks - 3 months. For most people, cannabis stays in the body in large enough quantities to be detected for no more than a month, and often as little as 10 days. Specific detection times, however, vary based on how long you have used the drug and what type of test you take. Height, age, gender, and the method used to ingest cannabis all affect how long it can be detected.

MYTH: Smoking weed helps with concentration, focus and learning.

FACT: Smoking weed just once a week could impact an individual's memory. A review of 48 relevant studies found marijuana use to be associated with reduced educational success (i.e., reduced chances of graduating). THC also effects receptors on nerve cells in parts of the brain that involve thinking, memory, coordination, and concentration; moreover, it can cause unwanted side effects, including: difficulty thinking and problem solving, memory and learning problems, distorted perception.

MYTH: Youth and adults experience the same long-term effects from marijuana use.

FACT: The younger the person is, the higher risk they are for negative long-term effects. The brain, especially the prefrontal lobe, naturally continues developing until the mid-20s, which is responsible for decision making, judgement, and impulse control. Moreover, marijuana use affects the brain's white matter and the communication between neurons (APA, 2015).

MYTH: Marijuana edibles are safer to use than inhaling marijuana

FACT: Since edibles take longer to digest and intoxication takes longer than smoking, users may consume more marijuana than intended to feel the effects faster, leading to an overdose, which includes rapid heart rate, confusion and vomiting.

MYTH: Youth are allowed to have marijuana in a vehicle, as long as they are not consuming it.

FACT: Drivers and passengers aren't allowed to have marijuana in moving vehicles, and new drivers in ICBC's graduated licensing program are barred from driving with any THC in their systems (CBC).

*Cannabis in a vehicle must be sealed and inaccessible to all passengers (CTV, Oct 10, 2018)

MYTH: Driving under the influence of marijuana is safer than driving under the influence of alcohol.

FACT: After alcohol, pot is the most commonly detected substance among drivers who die in traffic crashes. Among young drivers, driving after using cannabis is more prevalent than driving after drinking. • Cannabis impairs the cognitive and motor abilities necessary to operate a motor vehicle and doubles the risk of crash involvement.<http://www.ccdus.ca/Resource%20Library/CCSA-Cannabis-Use-Driving-Report-2017-en.pdf>