

Many people are concerned about smoking marijuana side effects. Cannabis use has been proven as safer than smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, or consuming any other illegal drug, but it is still important to be aware of potential marijuana side effects when smoking. Read on for a rundown on what is and isn't a common smoking marijuana side effect.

Smoking Marijuana Side Effect: Paranoia

Paranoia is part of how pop culture portrays pot users - it's a common trope to show a stoner character as paranoid and freaking out. But is it really a side effect? It's important to consider that many first time and beginner users of marijuana are inclined to feel paranoid already. They don't know what to expect, they're afraid of getting caught, or they've already been influenced to believe they will feel paranoid, etc. The logical result of these thought processes is a feeling of anxiety or paranoia.

Some people do, in fact, feel panic, fear, or anxiety after smoking marijuana. Some people do not; some feel the exact opposite. Marijuana is often used to treat anxiety, PTSD, and panic attacks. Obviously something that causes paranoia would not be helpful for such conditions. Indica cannabis and sativa cannabis cause different reactions; many believe that sativa tends to make one more paranoid than indica.

Marijuana has an interesting effect on anxiety. Some report paranoia after using marijuana, while others report a reduction in anxiety. Now, scientists from Vanderbilt University have uncovered evidence that may explain marijuana's complicated relationship with feeling anxious.

The findings, published March 5 in the journal *Neuron*, are the first to confirm that cannabinoid receptors are indeed present in the part of the brain that regulates anxiety and fear: the amygdala. Cannabinoid receptors are activated by chemicals in marijuana, called cannabinoids, and have been identified in many other brain regions as well.

“Study Explains Why Marijuana Makes You Paranoid”

<http://www.leafscience.com/2014/03/07/study-explains-marijuana-makes-paranoid/>

Smoking Marijuana Side Effect: Memory Loss

Forgetfulness is the other hallmark of the stereotypical stoner character. This is another expectation that is more complicated than it initially appears. Marijuana has been proven to impair short term memory, and it can cause distraction, euphoria, or confusion, among other symptoms. This is generally a short term effect that lasts up to a few hours at most. There is a fair amount of debate in the scientific community about the long term effects, though. Some believe that your brain is permanently, negatively altered after smoking; other studies have found that memory and cognition impairment remedies itself after abstaining for weeks or months at a time.

Another interesting point is that the use of marijuana can help people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), who want to dull or erase certain memories. Reducing the intensity of the memories can make them easier to process, making the patient more receptive to therapeutic treatments.

The most obvious effect of THC is the disruption of short-term memory. This means it will be harder to form new memories while high. THC also impairs the consolidation of short-term memories into long-term memories. This makes it difficult to remember what happened during the high — even after it wears off.

But THC does not impair your ability to recall existing memories. So, marijuana users will be able to remember things like their name and where they live, no matter how high they might get. Similarly, marijuana use does not lead to memory loss or dementia.

In fact, experts believe that the body's endocannabinoid system — a biological system made up of naturally occurring, marijuana-like compounds — acts to regulate memory formation. Specifically, it seems to function as a filter of sorts, preventing the brain from being overloaded with irrelevant or useless memories.

Marijuana and Your Memory

<http://www.leafscience.com/2014/10/21/marijuana-memory/>

Smoking Marijuana Side Effect: Impaired Brain Development

The human brain isn't fully formed until early adulthood, around age 25. The prefrontal cortex is the main focus here, because that is the part of the brain that handles things like decision making, risk management, attention, impulse control, and personality development. Studies estimate that by age 18 the brain is only halfway through the developmental process that changes it from child to adult brain. Marijuana can change the way the brain naturally prunes itself for optimal functioning, and reduce the amount of gray and white matter. Introducing marijuana into your system - especially before the age of 18 - can impair crucial development.

...studies suggest that regular MJ use during adolescence may lead to structural changes such as abnormal gray matter pruning patterns and reduced white matter myelination. These changes have been associated with poor neuronal efficiency and poorer cognitive functioning, especially psychomotor speed, executive functioning, emotional control, and learning and memory, even after a month of monitored abstinence.

“Dare to delay? The impacts of adolescent alcohol and marijuana use onset on cognition, brain structure, and function” (<http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsy.2013.00053/full>)

Smoking Marijuana Side Effect: Addiction

Rates of addiction to marijuana are extremely low, especially when compared to other addictive substances like tobacco, alcohol, heroin, and methamphetamines. There is still a risk, though, with about 9% of users developing an addiction, and about 20% of users developing a dependency. Teenagers are twice as likely to become addicted to marijuana as adults are, so this is another point in favor of delaying drug use until adulthood. There are some clear warning signs that someone may become addicted to marijuana, including mental disorders, high stress levels, or a family history of addiction. Most users, however, find it relatively easy and painless to slow down or stop smoking marijuana altogether - excluding the return of pain or symptoms previously managed by the marijuana.

Stalcup recommends this simple test for addiction. "To make the diagnosis, we propose an experiment. In the experiment, we ask you for a defined period of time not to use. The basic question that we ask is, 'Okay, so you smoke pot, that's not the issue. Can you not smoke pot?' Someone who's not an addict, that's not a problem. Being unable to not smoke it when you're trying not to smoke it defines addiction. I encourage anyone who's using any substance to do this experiment from time to time."

"Marijuana Addiction Is Rare, But Very Real"

<http://www.healthline.com/health-news/marijuana-addiction-rare-but-real-072014#1>

Smoking Marijuana Side Effect: Exposure to Germs & Viruses

Our recent article, *How Dirty is Your Vape Pen?*, addressed some of the common bacteria, communicable viruses, and other types of residue that can be found on the mouthpiece of your vape pen, pipe, or bong. These range from mildly gross (mold) to downright disgusting (fecal matter). There are some risks that you tend to encounter regularly (contracting the common cold), some risks that are unpleasant and inconvenient (herpes simplex), and some that are truly dangerous to your health (hepatitis, tuberculosis, etc). Here at Pipe Wipes our main concern is helping everyone to #smokeclean and avoid passing - or receiving - any of the aforementioned bacteria or contagions. Our Pipe Wipes pads and pipe cleaner towelettes clean your piece, inside and out, keeping everything safe and sanitary.

These are NOT Smoking Marijuana Side Effects:

- Death
- Propensity for violence
- Sexual aggression
- Stupidity
- "The Gateway Effect"

Marijuana Side Effect Resources

- At What Age Is The Brain Fully Developed?
- <http://mentalhealthdaily.com/2015/02/18/at-what-age-is-the-brain-fully-developed/>
- Dare to delay? The impacts of adolescent alcohol and marijuana use onset on cognition, brain structure, and function
- <http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsy.2013.00053/full>
- Marijuana Addiction Is Rare, But Very Real
- <http://www.healthline.com/health-news/marijuana-addiction-rare-but-real-072014#1>
- Marijuana and Your Memory
- <http://www.leafscience.com/2014/10/21/marijuana-memory/>
- Study Explains Why Marijuana Makes You Paranoid
- <http://www.leafscience.com/2014/03/07/study-explains-marijuana-makes-paranoid/>
- Study Explains Why Marijuana Makes You Paranoid
- <http://www.leafscience.com/2014/03/07/study-explains-marijuana-makes-paranoid/>
- What Marijuana Actually Does to Your Brain and Body
- <http://lifehacker.com/what-marijuana-actually-does-to-your-brain-and-body-1693986467>
- An Evidence Based Review of Acute and Long-Term Effects of Cannabis Use on Executive Cognitive Functions
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3037578/#R45>
- A Review of the Literature on the Adverse Consequences of Marijuana Use
- https://captus.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/LitReview1_Marijuana_NE_School_6_15_11.pdf