

The noun *side effect* is defined as “a secondary, typically undesirable effect of a drug or medical treatment.” Smoking pot side effects are sometimes difficult to determine, because the drug has so many functions. If you’re smoking pot to help with insomnia, for example, feeling sleepy is a desired effect. If you’re smoking it for daytime pain relief, though, sleepiness is an undesired side effect. Similarly, some people find that unwanted smoking pot side effects include increased appetite. For those dealing with nausea, eating disorders, or malnutrition, this can be the exact effect they are hoping for. This article will address smoking pot side effects when used recreationally, for no particular medical benefit. Keep in mind, though, that each person is different, and your experiences are likely to vary.

Smoking Pot Side Effects: Short Term

Commonly reported side effects occurring shortly after using marijuana include:

- Dry, red eyes
- Dry mouth (aka “cottonmouth”)
- Drowsiness
- Increased heart rate
- Dizziness
- Anxiety
- Relaxation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reduced reaction time
- Increased appetite

Less common side effects, usually as a result of ingesting an excessive amount of marijuana, include:

- Hallucinations
- Paranoia
- Disassociation
- Extreme lethargy
- Confusion

Smoking Pot Side Effects: By Association

It is important to note that some side effects are not necessarily from the actual marijuana, but rather from the ingestion method, person’s individual health history and body chemistry, or environmental factors. People taking certain medications may find that side effects increase as the marijuana interacts with their prescription drugs. Others may experience lung damage from using harsh inhalation methods, such as dry pipes or joints compared to bong, e-pens, or

vaporizers. The use of everyday lighters and matches can cause the smoker to inhale butane and/or sulfur.

Those sharing bong or pipes with others - especially in a group setting - find themselves at risk for germs and viruses transmitted orally. This can range from the relatively mild common cold, all the way to oral herpes or severe strains of the flu. Here at Pipe Wipes we advocate using a Pipe Wipe before each hit, to ensure that you aren't receiving bacteria, residue, or germs left by the prior smoker.

Smoking Pot Side Effects: Long Term

Regular, long term use of marijuana does increase the risk of other, more serious side effects. Teenagers should not use marijuana regularly, if at all, because it can drastically impact their brain during a crucial point in development. The hippocampus and other areas for reasoning, impulse control, and similarly important functions continue to develop until early adulthood. Marijuana can alter this essential development, resulting in long term concerns.

Studies have shown that frequent, heavy marijuana use can have a negative impact on fertility. Results are not clear on the impact to female fertility, but marijuana can cause lower sperm count and less mobile sperm in males. Marijuana use can also be dangerous for pregnant women or those trying to conceive. Reports on this vary, though; see our article "Smoking Pot While Pregnant" for further details.

The stereotypical side effects for long term or heavy marijuana users range from decreased motivation and inability to concentrate to basic stupidity. As with any stereotypes, these must be viewed with some criticism. It is certainly true that many "potheads" or "burnouts" do little more than smoke and laze around. It is also completely true that many, many successful members of society - including doctors, lawyers, government officials, teachers, parents, and more - use pot regularly and without detriment.

The risk of marijuana addiction is vastly lower than the risk of becoming addicted to alcohol, cigarettes, and hard drugs like heroin or amphetamines. There is a risk, though, and it is often thought of as more of a mental addiction than physical. As with anything else that you enjoy regularly, or use regularly to treat symptoms, there is a chance of becoming dependent. The good news, though, is that smoking pot side effects do NOT include death, aggression, violent behavior, or the like. All things considered, risky smoking pot side effects can hardly compare to the common results of addiction to tobacco, alcohol, prescription painkillers, and other illegal drugs.