

# Cannabis

## Ways to reduce harms



### Firstly, a few key things to know about cannabis...

- Cannabis contains THC which makes you feel 'high' and cannabidiol (CBD), which can reduce feelings of worry or anxiety.
- Cannabis affects everyone differently. Even the same person can experience it differently on separate occasions or over their lifetime. Most people use it to feel relaxed or happy/euphoric or to manage pain, while others may find that it causes them to feel anxious or paranoid. If possible, it can be helpful to find out what strand or strength of cannabis you have (i.e. ratio of THC to CBD).
- Cannabis can now be prescribed for a number of medical conditions. If you use cannabis for a commonly prescribed condition (e.g. pain relief), consider seeing a GP for a professional assessment on the best product to meet your needs legally.
- Whilst some cannabis products can be prescribed for certain medical conditions, the law varies regarding how and where medicinal cannabis products can be stored, transported, and/or used.
- There are also products referred to as 'synthetic cannabis' (e.g. 'K2/Spice'). These don't come from the cannabis plant. They are untested and the effects are unpredictable. The use of synthetic cannabis has caused significant health problems (including deaths) across Australia.

### It's important to know that there is no safe level of non-prescribed cannabis use.

The following questions refer to non-prescribed cannabis use only.

Would you try any of these strategies below? (or maybe you do them already?)	Yes	Maybe	No
Setting limits on how much you will use each day/week/month?			
Delaying your first use for the day until after you have finished certain jobs/activities?			
Delaying use until later in the afternoon or evening?			
Ensuring you have healthy snacks on-hand in case you get the munchies?			
Having a few cannabis-free days each week?			
Having a 3 or 4 week break from cannabis a few times a year?			
Only using in places where you feel safe and comfortable?			
If you have cannabis at home, storing it safely out of reach of children and pets?			
Do you smoke your cannabis? If so would you consider...	Yes	Maybe	No
Not spinning your cannabis with tobacco? <i>NB: This is considered to be the most harmful way to consume cannabis, and can lead to tobacco dependence</i>			
Not holding in the smoke for as long as you can? <i>NB: THC is rapidly absorbed by the lungs, so holding in smoke does not necessarily make you feel more stoned</i>			
Avoiding using plastic bongs or aluminium cans which, when heated, can release toxins?			
Cleaning bowls, pipes, cone-pieces or bongs regularly to avoid getting sick?			
Switching to vaporising, oral drops or edibles to reduce lung harms? <i>(see warning below)</i>			



#### NB: BE CAREFUL EATING CANNABIS OR USING OIL/DROPS

Whilst considered safer overall, it is sometimes difficult to know the exact dose when you eat cannabis or use oil/drops. This means that the risk of unintentional overdose is increased. Try a small amount first and then wait an hour before having more.





### Be aware when mixing

Mixing cannabis with other drugs can have unpredictable effects. For example, when mixed with alcohol it can sometimes cause nausea/vomiting. When mixed with stimulants (e.g. 'dexies', meth, coke) or hallucinogens (e.g. LSD, magic mushrooms), it can sometimes cause anxiety, paranoia, confusion or seeing or hearing things that aren't really there.



### Mind your head

Pay attention to how cannabis affects your body and mind. Using cannabis when you are feeling worried, anxious or paranoid and can make these feelings much worse. For people with a family history of mental health concerns (including bipolar or schizophrenia), cannabis use can increase the chances of developing or making existing symptoms worse.



### Do you use regular medications?

Sometimes cannabis can affect how these medicines work. Check the medicine packet and/or ask your doctor.



### Cannabis and driving

Cannabis can affect your ability to drive safely, and it is illegal to drive/cycle under the influence of cannabis. It's also difficult to know how much your driving skills have been affected or how long it remains in your system. Fatigue, hangovers or come-downs from drugs can also affect your driving skills.

For people who use cannabis infrequently, roadside drug tests can detect cannabis in your saliva for around 12 hours after use, up to around 30 hours if you use regularly. It can be detected in urine for much longer, especially if you are a frequent user (i.e. up to a month).



### Practice safe sex

Carry and use condoms and access regular STI testing, especially whenever you start having sex with a new partner.

### Are you pregnant, breastfeeding or parenting?

Using any substance when planning a pregnancy, pregnant, or while breastfeeding can affect your baby's body and brain development. Talk to a medical professional for advice, especially if considering detoxing whilst pregnant.

Substance use can affect your children and others around you. Ensure your children remain safe and supervised at all times.

**Note: Sleeping with a child in the same bed while under the influence of substances can be particularly dangerous.**

### Responding to a cannabis overdose

Signs of a cannabis overdose include:

- Chest pain
- Rapid heartbeat
- Nausea and vomiting
- Trouble breathing
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't really there
- Severe anxiety and panic attacks
- Feeling as if you are not yourself or that you might die

If this occurs, seek assistance by calling triple zero (000) and ask for 'AMBULANCE'

Unfortunately, there's no way to reverse a cannabis overdose. The effects have to wear off with time.

**What would be signs that your cannabis use is becoming more of a problem? When would you know it's time to take a break and/or seek help?**

