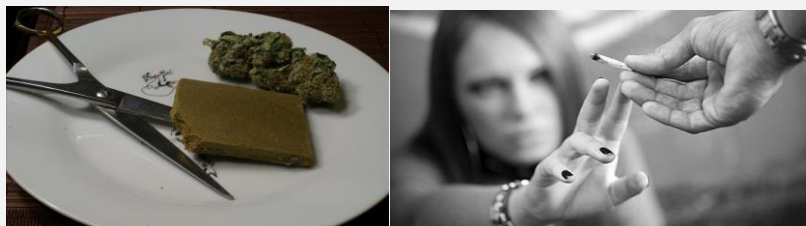


Cannabis Leaflet Guide for families

What is Cannabis? Cannabis is a plant based product. Today's drug is much more potent than that grown in the past. The increased strength is due to it being force grown which releases higher levels of THC which can be harmful and can lead to psychotic episodes.

What does it look like? Resin – a brown/black lump, known as ganja, hashish. Herbal cannabis – made up of the dried flowering tops and variable amounts of dried leaves – known as grass, marijuana, or weed. Commonly smoked in a joint/spliff.



SHORT TERM EFFECTS	LONG TERM EFFECTS
Distorted perception	Memory loss
Loss of coordination	Tiredness
Memory loss	Lung infections
Panic	Infertility
Paranoia	Skin disorders
Increased heart rate	Cancer causing substances

Contact Us



Telephone 0749177249
Castle Street Market Square Letterkenny
Donegal

Facts and Myths about CANNABIS



Northwest Regional
Drug & Alcohol Task Force



www.nwdrugtaskforce.ie

More Facts and Myths

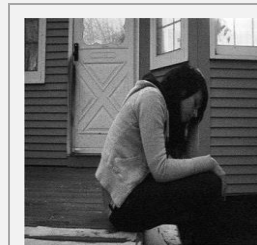
Facts and Myths	1
Did you know?	2
Where to get help	3
How can cannabis effect my family	4
More Facts and Myths	5

MYTH: Cannabis is harmless



FACT: Cannabis cannot directly kill you but it is not risk free. Regular use has been associated with long term problems, memory loss and lung cancer. To a developing brain like most teenagers it can be toxic, leading to panic attacks, depression and poor mental health.

MYTH: Cannabis is not addictive



FACT: The desire for Cannabis can have a powerful pull over someone, like smoking cigarettes it can be hard to quit. Cannabis is addictive. Tolerance levels go up hence a need to get more of it. Withdrawal symptoms can occur you may give up your activities to support the habit.

MYTH: Driving while high on Cannabis is Safer than doing it when drunk



FACT: Even a moderate dose of Cannabis can impair driving performance. It affects alertness, concentration, perception coordination and reaction time.

How can Cannabis effect my family



- **FINANCIALLY** : Cannabis use by a family member can have a devastating effect financially on everyone in the household. The amount of money used for recreational drug use or habit could be going to other things in the family. For some who are caught using or carrying Cannabis, they could face jail time, probation, court costs and fines. If their employers are aware of their drug use or they fail a drug test at work they could lose their job.
- **MENTALLY**: Cannabis can have a negative effect on your mental health, there are certain functions that become impaired. It can enhance feelings of intense thoughts, anxiety and increase appetite. It can make you sleepy losing your sense of reality in your surroundings. The loss of focus means missing out on family time. It can result not being mentally aware of possible dangerous situations in the home with children.
- **PHYSICALLY** : The main chemical found in Cannabis is called THC. THC is what causes the brain cells to change. Therefore you experience changes in sight, smell, touch and taste. Using cannabis when you are pregnant or breastfeeding can affect the development of your baby.

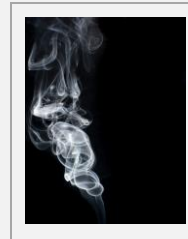
Facts and Myths

MYTH: I can smoke Cannabis and still get straight A's



FACT: Researchers have found that heavy Cannabis use may be problematic during peak learning years. The brain is still developing in teenage years. Smoking Cannabis can impair the ability to retain information affecting short term memory.

MYTH: Cannabis isn't as bad as Cigarettes



FACT: Cannabis contains many of the same cancer causing chemicals found in ordinary tobacco. Therefore if you smoke cannabis regularly you may experience the same breathing problems as those who smoke cigarettes.

MYTH: Not much parents can do about stopping kids experimenting



FACT: Most parents are surprised to learn that they are the most powerful influence on their children when it comes to drugs. The message needs to start with parents. Kids need to hear the risks from someone they trust. Stay involved in their lives.

Did you know?

What to look out for as a parent

Rolling papers, pipes, dried plant material, smell of burnt rope. Seeing small burn holes in jumpers and shirts around the waist area from burning resin and rolling joints.

“smoking cannabis leads to some changes in the brain similar to those caused by cocaine, heroin and alcohol.”

Recognizing signs of use.

The following depends on the strength of the drug and the frequency of its use but are part of the signs to look out for:

- Bloodshot eyes, use of eye drops or sunglasses at inappropriate times
- Unexplainable giddiness or dizziness
- Unusual odor on clothing

Where to get help?

Parent Stop Ltd



Parent Stop is a free and confidential parent support service based in County Donegal. If you need support on this topic or any parenting / guardian challenges please contact the service nearest to you and talk to one of our parent support officers.

They will point you in the direction of services you may require including those of Addiction Services within the HSE.



Alternatively there are other projects funded by the North West Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force who are available to help and can be contacted through the following web site.
www.nwdrugtaskforce.ie