



**Although it was once used in medicine, marijuana is doubly risky for people with epilepsy. Not only is the substance illegal, it may also trigger seizures.**

For around 5,000 years marijuana has been thought to have medicinal properties. In Australia, tincture of cannabis was used in medicine until the 1960s, when it was declared a prohibited drug.

Marijuana is also called grass, weed, cannabis or pot. Hash and skunk are stronger forms. All contain a chemical called Tetra Hydra Cannabinol (THC), which is the active component. THC is readily absorbed in the brain and is mind-altering. It can be detected in the body for weeks after use.

**Cannabis has been used to treat conditions such as:**

- ❖ Nausea and loss of appetite caused by the treatment for cancers and AIDS
- ❖ Chronic pain
- ❖ Glaucoma, for reducing pressure within the eye
- ❖ Huntington's chorea
- ❖ Parkinsonian tremor

**Immediate effects of marijuana include:**

- ❖ A relaxed or 'high' feeling
- ❖ Dizziness, sleepiness
- ❖ Bloodshot eyes
- ❖ Feeling very thirsty or hungry
- ❖ Anxiety or paranoia
- ❖ Loss of inhibition

Effects vary depending on the strength of the marijuana and whether substances such as alcohol and other drugs have also been used.

**Short-term effects when smoking regularly include:**

- ❖ Problems with memory and learning
- ❖ Difficulty concentrating and problem-solving
- ❖ Loss of interest in other activities
- ❖ Poor coordination
- ❖ Poor judgment
- ❖ Increased heart rate
- ❖ Poor motivation

**Possible long-term effects of smoking marijuana include:**

- ❖ Similar problems to smokers e.g. chest problems such as coughing, wheezing, chest infections and asthma
- ❖ THC can damage cells and tissues that help protect against disease
- ❖ Memory and learning problems
- ❖ Paranoia

- ❖ Confusion
- ❖ Hallucinations
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Psychosis
- ❖ Balance and coordination difficulties
- ❖ Cancer of the mouth, throat and lungs

These kind of effects can seriously impact schooling, employment, sports, driving, health, relationships and other aspects of life.

### Is it a useful antiepileptic medication?

Research into the effects of marijuana on seizure activity is inconclusive. Some animal models and some uncontrolled clinical human studies do suggest that marijuana has antiepileptic effects in humans but this may be specific to certain seizure types. Overall, there is insufficient clinical data to conclude if recreational or chronic use of marijuana has any influence on seizures. As the data remains limited, and in some cases conflicting, caution is needed if using cannabis and cannabinoids to control seizures.

**Marijuana use in Australia is not legal and therefore not recommended for use as an antiepileptic agent.**

### Can marijuana increase seizures?

Some studies and anecdotal reports show that high doses of THC can trigger seizures. Marijuana can temporarily impair short-term memory and like alcohol, it may increase the chance of missing antiepileptic medications. Marijuana use or withdrawal could potentially trigger seizures in some people.

#### REFERENCES

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This information is given to provide accurate, general information about epilepsy. Medical information and knowledge changes rapidly and you should consult your doctor for more detailed information. This is not medical advice and you should not make any medication or treatment changes without consulting your doctor.