



# Marijuana ABUSE

Marijuana, also known as cannabis, grass, boom, joint, zol, weed, hash, pot and many other street names, is South Africa's most commonly used drug, especially among youth, because it is cheap and highly accessible. It is generally smoked but very often also by being mixed into a dough and baked, or used as tea leaves and the infusion is then drunk. Sometimes it is mixed with other drugs for greater effect. The active ingredient is THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) which is a central nervous system hallucinogen. *South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU) project (2014)*

## Legal Aspects



In 2018, South Africa created partial legalisation of marijuana. This allows an individual to use and possess the drug within limits. The law does not allow for purchase or sale of the product and this is still deemed illegal. Possession of large quantities is also illegal. Whilst you are allowed to travel with minimal amounts within national boundaries, use of the product in public spaces also remains illegal. There are still many grey areas around the legal use of marijuana. As such, these need to be extensively explored to avoid any conflict with the law. If smoking, the laws and restrictions around smoking also apply.

## Harmful Effects

- In men, it may affect sperm health and could lead to testicular cancer
- It makes your heart work harder and increases the chance of a heart attack or stroke
- Long exposure in pregnant women runs the risk of underweight or premature babies
- Impedes brain activity and impairs ability to learn, remember and focus
- Impacts on the lungs and can create respiratory problems
- Social impacts include poor or abusive relationships, academic problems, higher addiction rates to other substances and antisocial personality disorders.
- It can often leave you feeling anxious, panicked and feeling afraid, raises the chances of clinical depression and can lead to paranoia i.e. losing touch with reality, seeing and hearing things that are not real.

## Addiction

About 1 out of 10 individuals who use marijuana, run the risk of becoming addicted to it. The earlier the use starts, the greater the chance of addiction.

### Early indications of addiction could be when:

- the behavior starts disrupting academics, job performance and relationships
- it feels that you are unable to function or enjoy a healthy social life without a smoke
- you can't concentrate or feel agitated without the drug
- you start to develop withdrawal symptoms - irritability, restlessness and inability to sleep as you develop strong cravings
- you struggle to let go of the habit, despite seeing the harmful effects



## On reaching out

Acknowledge that you have a problem – it's the first step in seeking assistance

Believe in a friend whom you think can help – speak to them

Contact the CCDU office on [info.ccd@wits.ac.za](mailto:info.ccd@wits.ac.za) or alternatively call the

Wits Student Crisis Line **0800 111 331**

### SOME USEFUL CONTACTS:



Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa  
0861 HELPA (435 722)



Al-Anon  
0861 ALANON (25 26 66)



Narcotics Anonymous SA  
083 900 MY NA (083 900 69 62)



SA National Council on Alcoholism  
and Drug Dependence (SANCA)  
08611 REHAB (73422) or  
(011) 673-0400



social development  
Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Department of Social  
Development's  
Substance Abuse Line  
0800 12 13 14 or  
SMS 32312

### REFERENCES:

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