

### **What are potential side effects and harms of cannabis?**

Most of the reported adverse effects of cannabis use are related to high doses of the cannabinoid (cannabis chemical) THC. In the short term, higher doses of THC can produce intoxication, lack of coordination, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, anxiety, or paranoia as well as an increase in heart rate or a rise or fall in blood pressure. Long-term regular smoking of cannabis flower has been shown to be harmful to the lungs and can even lead to chronic health conditions such as emphysema<sup>1</sup>. In addition, approximately 5% of those who use high-dose THC can develop a severe, though not life-threatening reaction, called cannabis hyperemesis syndrome<sup>2</sup> and 10% may become physically addicted to THC, a condition called cannabis use disorder<sup>3</sup>. It should be noted that there has never been a reported death from ingestion of even very high doses of cannabis.



The other important cannabis safety concern is the potential interaction between CBD and various prescription medications including certain blood thinners, anti-psychotics, seizure medications, statin drugs, and opiates including propoxyphene and buprenorphine.

Because of a lack of data, it is recommended that those who are pregnant, who are planning to become pregnant, or who are breastfeeding NOT use cannabis compounds. In addition, regular use of high-dose THC may lower sperm counts and decrease fertility in men<sup>4</sup>.

Most of the reported side effects of cannabis can be avoided by starting with low doses of balanced CBD and THC preparations in oral forms. In addition, it is important to check for potential CBD-cannabis drug interactions with a cannabis-literate clinician who can help to minimize the likelihood of side effects or assist in managing them as needed.

1 Chest CT Findings in Marijuana Smokers. Luke Murtha, Paul Sathiadoss, Jean-Paul Salameh, et al. *Radiology*. Vol 307, No. 1

2, 3 Medical Cannabis in Canada. Mark H. Kimmins, MD. Milner and Associates. 2019.

4 The Effect of Marijuana on the Incidence and Evolution of Male Infertility: A Systemic Review. Mirra Srinivasan, Ranim Hamouda, Baba Ambedkar, et al. *Cureus*. 2021. Dec; 13 (12).