



The Effects of Cannabis Smoking: What You Need to Know

The most common way of consuming cannabis is through inhalation. When cannabis is inhaled, the smoke is directly delivered into the lungs. From there, it is absorbed into the blood stream and its effects — feelings of euphoria, relaxation, difficulties concentrating and slowed reaction — are quickly felt by the brain and body. The effects can be felt within seconds to minutes, with full effects felt within 30 minutes and lasting up to six hours. Some residual effects can last up to 24 hours.

A misconception about cannabis is that it is harmless. It is thought that because it is a plant, the smoke it produces is safe. However, evidence indicates that cannabis smoke can negatively affect heart and lung health. If you are thinking of smoking or vaping cannabis, this is what you need to know:

1. **Cannabis smoke contains many of the same chemicals as tobacco smoke.** Both cannabis and tobacco smoke contain many of the same toxins, irritants and carcinogens that are known to be associated with heart and lung illnesses. When people who smoke cannabis, using a joint, a vaping device, a bong or a pipe, inhale more deeply and keep the smoke in their lungs for longer, this results in greater exposure to chemicals, which can provoke greater irritation of lung tissue.
2. **Smoking cannabis can negatively affect heart and lung health.** Smoking cannabis, especially among those who use cannabis regularly (weekly or more frequent use over months or years) or heavily (daily or more frequent use) can negatively affect the function of the heart, lungs and arteries. It is also believed that smoking cannabis can potentially increase the risk of stroke, heart attack and inflammation of arteries. More studies are needed to confirm these relationships, but caution should be taken, especially for people with underlying heart and lung conditions.

Studies have shown that smoking cannabis can negatively impact the health of lungs. This can result in symptoms such as chronic coughing, phlegm production, wheezing, sore throat, hoarse voice and tightness in the chest. Smoking cannabis long term can worsen these symptoms and lead to chronic bronchitis. The relationship between cannabis smoke and other lung diseases, such as lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), is currently unclear.

3. **Vaping unregulated cannabis has been linked with severe lung and pulmonary illnesses.** Recent evidence links vaping cannabis products purchased from the illicit market to severe lung and pulmonary illnesses. This is likely the result of high levels of vitamin E or other toxins that are present in cannabis oil cartridges purchased from the illicit market. Researchers are currently investigating the short- and long-term affects of vaping on health and if vaping cannabis is less harmful than smoking cannabis. Cannabis vaping products from legal, regulated retailers and producers in Canada are strictly regulated and assessed for quality and contaminants.

Quitting cannabis smoking can reverse some of the negative effects on lung and heart health.

For more information about cannabis and its effects on the lungs and heart, see CCSA's [*Respiratory and Cardiovascular Effects of Cannabis Smoking*](#).

To learn more, visit ccsa.ca/cannabis and canada.ca/cannabis



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