



CANNABIS AND TEEN MENTAL HEALTH

CANNABIS 101

Cannabis—also known as marijuana, pot, kush, and weed, among other names—is a psychoactive drug from the cannabis plant. Since November 2016, cannabis has been legal for nonmedical use in California for those ages 21 and over. With an increasing presence in our society, it's important to understand the effects of cannabis on teen mental health.

Cannabis Potency

Today, cannabis is much stronger than in past decades. Modern cannabis plants contain higher amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main psychoactive compound in the plant that gives users the sensation of feeling “high.” The higher the THC content, the stronger the effects on your brain and behavior.

MENTAL HEALTH RISKS FOR TEENS

THC and Mental Health

These days, teens are facing amounts of stress and anxiety like never before. As cannabis use has been growing in popularity following legalization, teens may see cannabis as a way to cope with their stress. Check out the effects that cannabis can have on a teen's mental health below:

- 1** Adolescent cannabis exposure and use are associated with:^{1,2,3}
 - A risk for later psychotic disorders in adulthood
 - Dependency and addiction for those who use cannabis to cope with negative emotions
- 2** THC has been shown to affect the part of the brain responsible for emotional regulation, making it harder for teens to manage stress and anxiety.²
- 3** High amounts of cannabis use can affect tolerance levels, making teens who use less sensitive to THC, meaning more THC is needed to feel the same effects.⁴



[Click here to learn more about cannabis health effects](#)

Sources

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/release/2020-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases>
2. Office of the Surgeon General. (2019). U.S. Surgeon General's advisory: Marijuana use and the developing brain. <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/addiction-and-substance-misuse/advisory-on-marijuana-use-and-developing-brain/index.html>
3. Bloomfield, M. A., Ashok, A. H., Volkow, N. D., & Howes, O. D. (2016). The effects of $\Delta 9$ -tetrahydrocannabinol on the dopamine system. *Nature*, 539(7629), 369–377. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature20153>
4. Colizzi, M., & Bhattacharyya, S. (2018). Cannabis use and the development of tolerance: a systematic review of human evidence. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 93, 1–25. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0149763418302665>