

# Cannabis



## TEA-BREAK GUIDE



**Cannabis** is a hallucinogenic drug that is derived from a plant. It has been around for thousands of years. Historically, most UK cannabis was imported as resin (hash), from North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Now, most UK cannabis is produced in the UK or mainland Europe and is mainly herbal cannabis. It is the most widely misused drug in the UK.

Hallucinogenic drugs can impact on your mental health. THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is the key psychoactive component. It is probably responsible for the euphoria and hilarity associated with cannabis. However, it may also be responsible for some of the negative symptoms including anxiety, paranoia and panic. CBD (cannabidiol) appears to reduce some of the negative effects of THC, reducing the extent of anxiety and panic in some people. Cannabis can also impair your memory, effect your motivation and give you mood swings.

Cannabis is easier to get hold of today than alcohol with young people saying you are never more than two clicks away from getting access to a dealer who is often another young person.

The current potency (strength) of cannabis coupled with low levels of CBD is an issue and why as professionals we should not be saying 'It is only cannabis' when talking about young people using this drug. The potency was 51% in 2005 and has increased to 94% in 2017. This is a significant increase but be aware this does not mean purity as it is still often cut with other chemicals. As well as potency, the ratio between THC and CBD has changed from 9%THC: 3%CBD in 2005. To 14%THC: 0.1%CBD in 2017. This is most concerning as the CBD helps reduce the negative effects of the THC but the low levels of CBD and high levels of THC are having a huge negative impact on the mental health of young minds who are using this drug.

There has been a 54.1% increase in YP presenting at A&E with primary and secondary diagnosis 'mental and behavioural disorder due to use of cannabinoids' and 54.1% increase in general mental health disorders due to cannabinoid use. (This is across the country not just in Northants)

### **Cannabis and the Law**

Cannabis is a Class B drug. This means it is illegal to have in your possession and you can get you up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. Supplying someone else, even your friends, can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. We do know that less YP are being criminalised for possession with a 53.4% reduction in prosecutions but more YP being criminalised for supply with a 14.5% increase in prosecutions and 25.6% increase in convictions. Having a drugs conviction can seriously impact on your life choices in terms of jobs in the future as well as having implications on travelling outside the UK.

### **More information/referrals**

Ngage offer a free, confidential and voluntary service for young people who may be experimenting or using drugs or alcohol who are under 18 years. They also offer free training for professionals. Contact Ngage: [ypnorthamptonshire@aquarius.org.uk](mailto:ypnorthamptonshire@aquarius.org.uk) - 01604 633848