Marijuana

Drug Classification: Hallucinogen
Drug Schedule: I
Addiction Potential: Moderate

Modes of Administration
Oral (consumed in foods such as brownies and tea)
Inhalation (smoked in a hand-rolled cigarette, pipe or bong)

Onset of Drug Effect(s): The primary chemical in marijuana, THC, enters the bloodstream from eating or smoking marijuana (Cannabis sativa).

Effects peak within 30 minutes of ingestion and residual effects can last up to 3 hours. Chemicals from marijuana remain in the body for much longer, including several weeks, depending on amount and potency of the marijuana used.

The effects vary from person to person depending on how strong the marijuana is, how it is taken (mode of administration), and whether other drugs are taken in combination.

Drug Action(s)
Acute effects on the mind and body include:
• Increased heart rate (average of 29 beats per minute MORE)
• Dryness of eyes and mouth
• Hypothalamus stimulation resulting in increased hunger (“munchies”)
• Disruption of coordination
• Distortion of thinking, perception, and problem solving
• Disturbed memory and learning processes
• Anxiety and paranoia are not uncommon and full blown panic attacks have been reported

Long terms effects on the mind and body include:
• Health issues similar to those faced by cigarette smokers: bronchitis, emphysema, cancer and heart problems (1 marijuana joint = 5 cigarettes)
• Delay of puberty and reduced sperm production in males; disrupted menstrual cycle and discharge of eggs from the ovaries in females. Pregnant women may miscarry; babies may be stillborn, have lower birth weight, or have nervous system disorders such as learning problems
• Damage to immunological system resulting in longer times to recover from disease
• Amotivational syndrome: one avoids doing the tasks he/she doesn’t want to do but must
• Onset or relapse of schizophrenia and depression in predisposed people

A Word about Marijuana as a Gateway Drug
Debate continues on whether marijuana is physiologically addictive or a gateway drug. Former users have substantiated physical withdrawal symptoms and animal studies suggest physical dependence. Marijuana was the primary drug for 25% of all admissions to drug treatment in 2000. In 95% of those who have used other illicit drugs, marijuana was used first. Research is being done now on whether marijuana “primes” the brain by making it more easily affected to drugs used in one’s future.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
201 Richmond Hall
28 Westhampton Way
University of Richmond, VA 23173

Phone (804) 289-8119
Fax (804) 287-1227
Email caps@richmond.edu

Student Health Center
Special Programs Building
28 Westhampton Way
University of Richmond, VA 23173

Phone (804) 289-8064
Dial-A-Nurse (804) 289-8700
Fax (804) 287-6466

wellness.richmond.edu