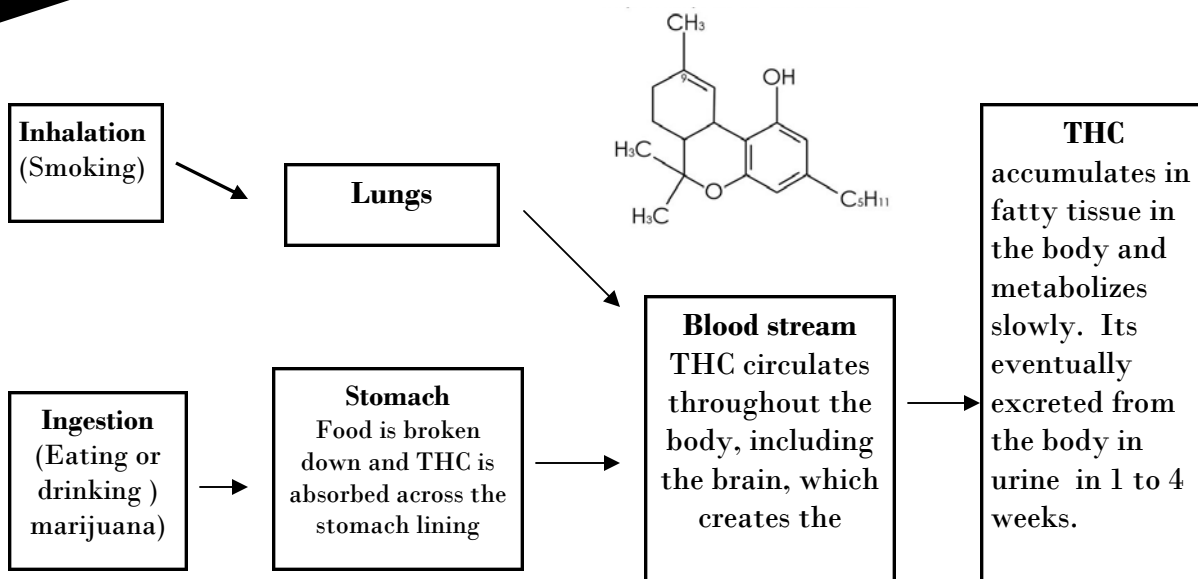


Marijuana 101:

Marijuana and the Body

Quick Quiz

How does Marijuana create the high feeling?
What does it do in your body?



Marijuana and the Brain:

In the brain, THC connects to specific sites called cannabinoid receptors on nerve cells and influences the activity of those cells.

- Some brain areas have many cannabinoid receptors; others have few or none.
- Many are found in the parts of the brain that influence pleasure, memory, thought, concentration, sensory and time perception and coordination.

Onset and Length of Effects:

Effects begin about 10 minutes after smoking, when the THC reaches the brain, and lasts 1-3 hours. If the marijuana is consumed in food or drink, the effects begin in about a half hour to an hour, and last for up to 4 hours.

(See back for more details...)

Effects of Marijuana:

Within a few minutes after inhaling marijuana smoke:

- Heart begins beating more rapidly, increasing 20 to 50 beats per minute from a normal rate of 70-80 beats per minute, in some cases even doubling. (Effect can be greater and more risky if other drugs, including alcohol, are taken with the marijuana).
- Bronchial passages relax and become enlarged.
- Blood vessels in the eyes expand, making eyes look red and/or bloodshot.

When THC enters the brain after about 10 minutes of inhalation, effects

include:

- Euphoric feeling, the “high”, by stimulating the brain’s reward system to release the chemical dopamine
- Feeling of relaxation
- Intensification of colors and sounds
- Perception that time moves more slowly
- Dry mouth, may become very hungry and/or thirsty
- Hands may tremble and grow cold
- Impaired judgment
- Impaired coordination and balance
- Attention shifts easily from one thing to another
- Cough, burning or stinging feeling in the mouth and/or throat
- Shortness of breath
- Sometimes produces anxiety, fear, distrust or panic.



* Effects vary depending on amount consumed and experiences can differ from person to person

After the “high” passes, about 1 to 3 hours after the THC enters the brain,

effects include:

- May feel tired, sleepy or depressed
- Sleep cycle is disrupted: that night, person will get less REM sleep than usual resulting in grogginess/tiredness and/or low energy the next day.
- Impaired short-term memory and recollection of events

Heavy use of Marijuana can also have these chronic effects:

Information for this handout can be found in “A Primer of Drug Action,” 2001, by Robert M. Julien, M.D., Ph.D and in “Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students: A Harm Reduction Approach,” 1999, by Linda A. Dimeff, John S. Baer, Daniel R. Kivlahan, and G. Alan Marlatt