

Fags 'n' Hash



Updated 2011



**The essential guide to cutting
down the risks of using
tobacco and cannabis**



**healthier
scotland**
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Cannabis and tobacco are both smoked, often together.

This booklet tells you how using them can affect you, what the law says and how to reduce the risks.

How is tobacco used?



Tobacco is usually smoked in:

- cigarettes
- roll-ups using cigarette papers
- pipes or cigars.

There are over 4,000 chemicals and gases in tobacco (such as ammonia, carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide). Many of them are killers, causing cancer and heart disease. Nicotine is the drug in tobacco that makes it addictive.

Cigarettes are designed to send a nicotine rush to your brain within a few seconds of inhaling.

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How is cannabis used?



Cannabis is usually found in two main forms:

- dried leaves and/or flowering tops of the plant (known as grass or weed)
- blocks of resin (hash, pot or blow).

Both forms are often mixed with tobacco and smoked together (known as joints) or in pipes (bongs).

Cannabis can also be mixed with food, taken as a tea or eaten on its own.

Why are they used?

People use cannabis and tobacco for their effects. With any drug, the effects depend partly on your mood, personality and surroundings.

One of the most common reasons why people begin to use tobacco and cannabis is that their friends encourage them.

People who smoke describe it as relaxing, making them feel more at ease. They often smoke to be sociable.

Cannabis is a mild hallucinogen, which means it can alter the way you see colours and shapes. Most people who smoke say the most common effects are:

- relaxation and tiredness
- the 'munchies'
- being talkative
- things sounding, looking and tasting different.

Other people feel it makes them tense and anxious.

What does the law say?

- It is illegal to sell tobacco to anyone under 18. Shopkeepers can be fined up to £5,000 for selling tobacco to under-age customers.
- Cannabis is a Class B drug. It is always illegal in Scotland to have cannabis grass or resin on you, to grow it or to give it to someone else (this is treated as supplying even if no payment is involved).

Even though Scotland has a different legal system from England and Wales, the laws on illegal drugs are the same across the whole of the UK.

There are slight differences in how police forces in different areas of the UK deal with minor drugs offences such as personal possession of small amounts of cannabis – but you must always remember that you could face prosecution for possessing any illegal drug.

In Scotland, if found in possession of cannabis, you will be reported to the Procurator Fiscal where a decision on cautioning or prosecuting will be made.

If convicted for possession you may go to prison for up to five years (maximum), face an unlimited fine or both. If convicted for supplying you may go to prison for up to 14 years (maximum), face an unlimited fine or both.

A drug conviction can affect your future job prospects and which countries you can visit or move to.



What's the harm?

The smoke from burning cannabis or tobacco or both contains poisonous gases that reduce your blood's ability to carry oxygen, and tars that can cause cancer.

When you smoke, these poisons go straight to your lungs. Smoking cannabis can give you even higher levels of cancer-causing tars, gases and chemicals than cigarettes. Smoking cannabis and tobacco multiplies the dangers.

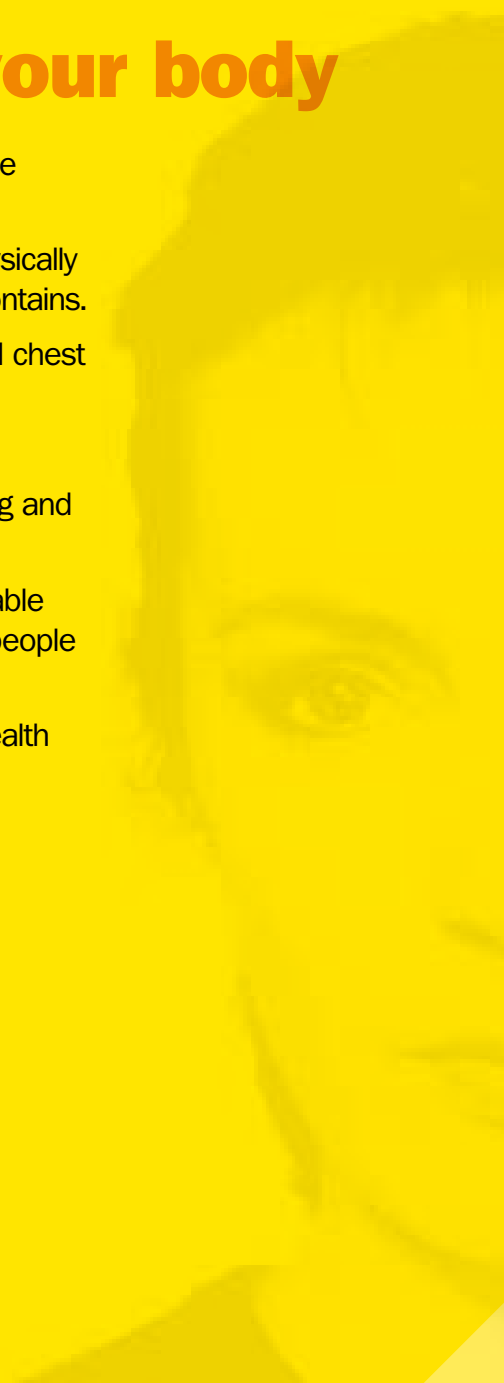
Joints don't usually have filters. What's more, the smoke is often drawn in deeper and held in the lungs for longer. These two factors mean that smoking cannabis and tobacco together is probably the most damaging way to use them.

Tobacco and your body

There is no safe level of smoking. Half the people who smoke will die from it.

- Tobacco can quickly become very physically addictive because of the nicotine it contains.
- You are more likely to catch colds and chest infections as a smoker.
- Smoking gives you wrinkles.
- Smoking causes cancers, strokes, lung and heart diseases.
- Tobacco is the single biggest preventable killer in Scotland, killing over 13,000 people every year.

Smoking is hard to stop, hard on your health and hard on your pocket.



Cannabis and your body

- Using cannabis makes some people feel tense and anxious.
- A common bad effect is the 'whitey' – light headedness, fainting and sometimes feeling sick. This is particularly associated with taking cannabis and alcohol together.
- Cannabis may make you less alert and can affect your decision-making and judgement. It is dangerous and illegal for you to drive or operate machinery when you are under its influence.
- Cannabis can contribute to mental health problems.

Can I become addicted?



Yes, if you smoke cannabis or tobacco or both regularly you may become dependent on using them and have withdrawal symptoms if you stop.

Tobacco

It can be hard to stop using tobacco. While your body gets rid of the chemicals in tobacco you might have:

- cravings for nicotine
- mood swings
- panic attacks
- headaches.

You may also feel cut off from friends who continue to smoke.



Cannabis

Regular cannabis users who stop may experience:

- restlessness
- anxiety
- sleeplessness.

You may also feel cut off from friends who continue to use cannabis.

Drug testing

Some industries – such as gas, oil, rail and construction – regularly test employees for drugs. Companies are also increasingly introducing pre-employment drug testing. Urine, saliva or blood can be tested but usually it's a urine test. Cannabis stays in your system and shows up in tests for longer than most other substances.

The following can affect how long cannabis stays in your system:

- Strength of cannabis.
- How often you use it – infrequent use will show up for a shorter time than regular use, heavy use will show up for longer.
- Body fat. The more body fat a person has, the longer cannabis can stay in their system.
- People with faster systems and more active lifestyles will clear cannabis faster than others.

Based on the above, the length of time that cannabis can be detected in your system varies from two days for light or one-off use up to 60 days for heavy, regular use.

How can you reduce the harm?

Tobacco

- There is no safe level of smoking – stopping is the only way to reduce harm to zero.
- Be aware of fire risks if you drink and smoke.
- Keep smoking materials away from children. Every year, young children are admitted to hospital, having poisoned themselves by eating cigarette ends.

If you decide that you want to stop smoking, you can talk to your GP, teacher or pharmacist. They can talk to you about the best ways to stop.

Cannabis

Limiting when you smoke cannabis may reduce the risk of becoming a heavy user.

Smoking cannabis with tobacco increases the damage to your mouth, throat and lungs – reduce the harm by smoking less.

If you eat or drink cannabis, it can be difficult to judge how much you've taken. It also takes longer to kick in and the effects can hit you suddenly and harder than you expect.

Hash is not produced in the most hygienic of conditions; it may come already mixed with other substances, which may be harmful, and with germs that are only destroyed by heating.

Don't mix drugs – that includes alcohol. You don't know what will happen.

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More help



For more help and advice, try one of these numbers:

Smokeline: freephone 0800 84 84 84

Information and support on stopping smoking.

www.canstopsmoking.com

Know the Score: freephone 0800 587 5879

Information on drugs.

www.knowthescore.info

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87

A free, confidential phoneline you can call when you're feeling down.

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

Also see:

www.seemescotland.org

Information on the Scottish Government funded 'see me' campaign, which aims to challenge the stigma of mental ill health.

www.knowcannabis.org.uk

Self-help website for cannabis users.

Childline: freephone 0800 11 11 11

Information and support for children on any subject.

Scottish Child Law Centre: 0131 667 6333

Information on the law for young people.

Gay and Lesbian helpline: 0207 837 7324

Information and support regarding sexuality.

More information

ASH Scotland

For information on tobacco and smoking.

8 Frederick Street

Edinburgh EH2 2HB

Tel: 0131 225 4725

www.ashscotland.org.uk

Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF)

For information on drugs and drug use.

5 Waterloo Street

Glasgow G2 6AY

Tel: 0141 221 1175

www.sdf.org.uk

West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service

For information and support on drugs including alcohol and tobacco.

47 Adelaide Street

Livingston EH54 5HQ

Tel: 01506 430225

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