

How cannabis can affect people with mental health problems

About this pack

Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK, but surveys show that many people are not aware of its harmful effects.

This is particularly important for people with mental health problems; the medical evidence is clear that cannabis can:

- > worsen the symptoms of mental illness;
- > interfere with people's self-management and medication; and
- > increase their likelihood of relapse.

This pack includes a range of resources that you can use to help discuss these issues with mental health patients or their carers. You can use them as a focus for discussion, give them to patients for information or incorporate them into a wider care plan. These resources have been produced after consultation with users, patients and mental health professionals.

This information alone may not be likely to convince people of the benefits to their mental health of stopping using cannabis. But as part of a wider package of care, its aim is to help draw people closer to the point where they decide for themselves to make the change.

Find out more

There are lots of other resources you can use to find out more about cannabis and how it affects people with mental health problems.

You can get information including news, research reports and discussion forums from the National Institute of Mental Health in England (NIMHE). Visit <http://nimhe.csip.org.uk/home> and <http://kc.nimhe.org.uk>

The children's mental health charity Young Minds also publishes information about cannabis and mental health problems. You can read these – or order copies – from their website at www.youngminds.org.uk

You can also find out more about cannabis and other drugs, as well as every aspect of government drugs policy, at www.drugs.gov.uk

If you want to point a service user towards more information about cannabis and other drugs, they can call FRANK on [0800 77 66 00](tel:0800776600) 24 hours a day for free, friendly and confidential advice and information, or go to talktofrank.com



might develop them in the future.

You might also find helpful the *Brief intervention for substance use: a manual for use in primary care - draft version 1.1 for field testing*, published by the World Health Organisation. You can find this at www.who.int/substance_abuse/activities/en/Draft_Brief_Intervention_for_Substance_Use.pdf

This document contains a useful summary of simple, brief interventions for substance misuse that can be used by non-specialists. These include:

- > giving personalised feedback on risk and harm;
- > emphasising the individual's personal responsibility for change;
- > encouraging goal-setting (for example start dates and daily

or weekly targets);

- > providing information about the nature and effects of a substance and its potential for harm;
- > supporting attempts to increase the patient's confidence in being able to reduce their consumption ('self-efficacy');
- > providing access to written self-help material for the individual to take away, containing more detailed information on consequences of use and tips for cutting down (as provided in the pack);
- > signposting individuals to having a wider general health check, where indicated; and
- > ensuring arrangements for follow-up monitoring.

See the full document to find out more.

What is in this pack?

This pack includes the following resources:

Cannabis and your mental health leaflet. Information that explains the impact of cannabis on people with mental health problems and offers advice about stopping using cannabis.

Cannabis and your mental health quiz. A short quiz addressing some of the key issues around cannabis and mental health.

A guide to cutting down and stopping cannabis use leaflet. Manageable steps that can be taken to cut down and stop using cannabis, based on a successful Australian project. This leaflet is

cannabis-specific, but when the use of other drugs or alcohol are interfering with the mental health of a patient, you may consider advising similar approaches to cutting down, subject to any medical advice where medically-assisted withdrawal may be needed. An A4 version with photocopyable worksheets is included in each pack **[NOTE: TO BE CONFIRMED]** and can be downloaded from the website listed below.

A **feedback form** for you to complete, so that we can find out how helpful you have found these resources and how we

To order more of these packs free of charge, call **0800 555 777** and ask for 'MH Cannabis pack'. Or you can order the leaflets separately.... **[TO BE CONFIRMED]** You can also download these resources from the NIMHE website at **<http://kc.nimhe.org.uk>**