Marijuana and Ritalin

Dear Alice,

I have ADHD and am prescribed 30 mg of Ritalin a day. However I also smoke pot at least once a week. Is it okay to be smoking while on Ritalin?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Ritalin and pot are curious substances ?some people may feel they have complimentary effects, while other times or for other people it?s possible the two may accentuate less pleasant properties. Sorry to say that it?s very difficult to know for sure about the dangers or benefits of these two substances used together, primarily because there is no published data available yet. This is not uncommon with pot, mostly because it is considered a controlled substance and there are restrictions on the types of research that can be conducted.

It may be helpful to consider the known side effects of both Ritalin and pot separately and keep a record of the side effects you do experience.

Known side effects of Ritalin:

- Stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite
- Vision problems, dizziness, mild headache
- Sweating, mild skin rash
- Numbness, tingling, or cold feeling in your hands or feet
- Nervous feeling, sleep problems (insomnia)
- Weight loss

Known side effects of pot (marijuana):

- Rapid heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased rate of breathing
- Red eyes
- Dry mouth
- Increased appetite, or ?the munchies?
- Slowed reaction time
When paired together, pot may reduce sleep problems caused by Ritalin or help normalize your appetite. Of course, that’s only if Ritalin was causing sleep or appetite issues and if pot doesn’t make it harder for you to fall or stay asleep. On the other hand, both Ritalin and pot are known to increase anxiety and nervousness. If you notice an increase in these symptoms, it may be due to the combination of the two.

Here’s a question for you to consider. Did you start smoking before or after being prescribed Ritalin? If you started smoking pot after, did you do so in order to treat certain side effects of your medication? If this is the case, there might be other, more reliable solutions. If you were smoking before the Ritalin, it might be helpful to consider abstaining from pot for a bit, to see how you feel while only taking one substance. There are a lot of potential results whenever substances are mixed, both desirable and undesirable. In the case of Ritalin and pot, we don’t have enough research yet to provide you with more definitive information. Just some food for thought?

Your primary care provider may be able to give you more specific information about how these two interact based on your personal health history, so let her/him know about your occasional use. You can also learn more about marijuana use and other substances by reading through the Go Ask Alice! Alcohol and Other Drugs [2] archive.

Hope this helps!

Alice!

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