Eating marijuana [1]

Dear Alice,

Is it harmful, under any circumstances, to eat marijuana instead of smoking it?

Answer

Dear Reader,

For those who may not like smoke getting in their eyes or don't want to inhale, swapping a pot-filled bong or joint for pots and pans may sound like a good idea. However, compared to smoking pot, there are greater risks of unpleasant side effects that may result from eating marijuana.

It's common to feel nauseated or physically uncomfortable after ingesting marijuana, and there's a greater risk of overdosing. Because the stomach doesn't absorb marijuana evenly, it's harder for people to estimate how much they need to eat to get high. There's also a delay in the time it takes for the drug to have its effect. This can cause people to think that they haven't eaten enough marijuana to get high, so they continue to scarf down more of it.

Symptoms of marijuana overdose may include disorientation, feeling delirious or feverish, and can be followed by hangover or stupor. In some severe cases, people who overdose may also become extremely paranoid, hallucinate, or have panic attacks (which may make them harmful to themselves or others). With any drug it is important to remember that the term 'overdose' refers to consuming an excessive amount of the drug, leading to negative and/or dangerous effects. Many people associate OD'ing with death or hospitalization; however, overdosing on marijuana could imply feeling very paranoid while high or lethargic the next day rather than spelling out a trip to the emergency room.

Even though an overdose may feel like death, the good news is marijuana itself isn't lethal. The bad news is that there's no escaping the unwanted side effects, including dry mouth, blood-shot eyes, and increased heart rate and blood pressure until the body breaks down the drug. Moreover, these effects may actually be more severe and last longer when food is spiked with marijuana because marijuana has a stronger, more prolonged effect on the body when it's eaten. This makes activities that require concentration and coordination, such as schoolwork, driving, or operating heavy machinery, even more problematic or dangerous while under the influence. How's that for some food for thought?

Alice!

Category:
Related questions

Marijuana long-term effects? [4]
Tremors ? from marijuana use or anxiety? [5]
Moderate marijuana use and health effects? [6]
Marijuana: Does it cause cancer? [7]
Marijuana: Certain methods of smoking healthier than others? [8]
Smoking marijuana for essential tremor disorder? [9]

Published date:
Apr 13, 2007
Last reviewed on:
Mar 11, 2014

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/eating-marijuana#comment-0

Links