

Appendix 7 The Rethinking Choices After Psychosis (ReCAP) trial psychoeducational materials

Facts about cannabis



A Few Facts about Cannabis

1. Like most other psychoactive substances which produce euphoric effects, the regular, heavy use of cannabis may result in a cannabis dependence syndrome. There is now a growing body of evidence that suggests there is a cannabis dependence syndrome which is consistent with that of other classic drugs of dependence.
2. There is now evidence that cannabis also produces that other major characteristic of drug dependence, a withdrawal syndrome.
3. THC is to cannabis as nicotine is to tobacco. Different plants and plant strains of varying quality may yield differing quantities of THC. THC, like nicotine, is the substance primarily responsible for the development of cannabis dependence.
4. Approximately 10% of those who ever use cannabis become daily users, and approximately 20-30% use cannabis on a weekly basis.
5. The main health problems arising from long term cannabis abuse are related to the respiratory system. Like tobacco, the inhaled smoke from burnt plant material contains tar, carbon monoxide and carcinogenic substances. These have contributed to cancers of the upper airways and oral cavity, as well as diseases such as emphysema and increased risk of bronchitis and pneumonia.
6. Women who smoke cannabis are exposed to the risk of reduced fertility, low birth weight babies and possible contribution to birth defects.
7. A number of potentially harmful psychological effects are associated with long term cannabis abuse. These include:
 - Changes in short term memory and difficulty concentrating.
 - Some individuals appear to be at risk of development of symptoms of psychosis.
 - Some individuals appear to experience reductions in motivation and achievement of goal-oriented tasks, including school and work performance.
8. Restricting smoking to weekends or social occasions is often difficult to achieve in the long term.