

# Cannabis – Risks, Signs and What to Do

Finding out that your child has experimented with cannabis or has used alcohol **doesn't** mean you need to panic and immediately assume they will go on to lead a life of crime and addiction



For young people the main substances used within Wokingham are cannabis, alcohol and tobacco. You may have heard about 'Legal Highs' and Xanax recently in the news. Legal Highs are no longer legal and are now termed New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), these, along with Xanax, have seen a big increase nationally. This is also a concern locally. For more information on NPS and Xanax see FRANK ([NPS](#) & [XANAX](#)).

For the purpose of this communication we are focusing on cannabis. Cannabis can also be called Hash, Grass, Weed, Skunk.

## It's only cannabis?

Cannabis is illegal and the substance that young people are exposed to today is much stronger and more potent compared with the cannabis that was known previously. For that reason those that use it are at a higher risk of mental health problems and addiction. The cannabis today has been grown and engineered to have high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC); the chemical that can lead to hallucinations and altered senses. Some cannabis is found to be up 80 times more potent than the cannabis that was available 15 years previously.

For more information about cannabis please visit FRANK - <http://www.talktofrank.com/drug/cannabis>

## What are the risks?

There are many myths about cannabis, some that it is safe because it is natural and others that it will ruin your life. The truth is that it can have some very harmful effects, these include;

- Impact on school attendance, achievement and short term memory loss
- Hallucination, psychotic episodes (when someone is unable to tell the difference between reality and their imagination), detrimental effects on mental health, mood changes and behavioural issues
- Funding the habit can lead to antisocial behaviour, crime, even gang activity
- Young people are at a higher risk of being encouraged to take other illegal drugs
- There could be legal implications in later life when applying to travel abroad or undergoing employment references and criminal record checks

## What are the signs? *(These are indicators to look out for, but they do not mean that your child is definitely taking cannabis)*

- Bloodshot eyes
- Increased appetite and weight gain
- Lack of motivation
- Nervous or paranoid behavior
- Impaired coordination - slowed reaction time
- A distinct change in behaviour

## What to do if you are worried

'Don't panic' – help and support is out there

## What can you do to help your child?\*

- Don't be complacent and believe that your child would never experiment with drugs
- Support them to find their own identity, build their self-esteem and feel they have a voice
- Divert them to positive activities and encourage the right friends where possible
- Listen to what they have to say and let them know you're always there for them
- Try not to challenge them with threats and regular discipline – they could shut down
- Although we all want our children to do well at school try to remember the pressure they are under to perform and achieve – help them find ways to relax and unwind
- Ask for help from professionals – you can speak with your GP, School, or the local drug and alcohol service SMART if you have concerns or would like support and advice

## Where to go for specialist help?

- SMART provides support for children and young people who are misusing drugs and alcohol or affected parental drug or alcohol use. They will also provide support and advice to families about any substances being used
- DrugFAM will offer advice and support to families and loved ones affected by someone's drug or alcohol use

### SMART

38 Station Road,  
Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2AE  
Telephone: 0118 977 2022  
Mobile: 077649 60465  
<https://www.smartcjs.org.uk/contact-us/wokingham/>

SMART Chat – online support from 6-11pm everyday (open to parents, young people and adults)

<https://www.smartcjs.org.uk/chat-online/>



### DrugFam

[OFFICE@DRUGFAM.CO.UK](mailto:OFFICE@DRUGFAM.CO.UK)  
Telephone: 0300 888 3853  
<http://www.drugfam.co.uk/>



\*Support advice is relevant for other types of substances. If you are concerned then please contact SMART or DrugFam for specialist advice.

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