

Cannabis is used by many people. Some people use it at parties, some use it a couple of times a week, while others use it every day. But all of these people have increased risk of developing a mental health problem due to their cannabis use.

Some people will admit if their cannabis use is beginning to cause problems, while others might be too scared or ashamed to admit to it. Others might not even realise how their lives are changing because of their cannabis use.

If you are worried about someone who is using cannabis you may be able to help. How you help will depend on the type of relationship you share, and the person's willingness to receive help, but either way there are a couple of things to think about before you offer help.

Before you help:

- Learn about how cannabis use can affect someone's health, especially their mental health. Have some information available for your friend, or provide a list of useful websites they might like to look at when they are alone.
- Understand that some people do not see their cannabis use as a problem; in fact some may say that it helps them manage how they feel.
- Think about how they will react if you approach them with your worries. They might be pleased to have someone willing to help or they might be defensive, angry, or perhaps avoid contact with you for a while.
- Think about how and what you are going to say, and make sure it is a private conversation. Talk about the changes you have noticed in how they behave, talk, appear etc. but avoid criticising the person.
- Also remember, sometimes people can only accept little bits of information/help at a time, so you might need to approach them about it again another time.

If they do want your help:

- Talk to them about how you can help. Some options include; helping to find more information, helping to find professional help, or to be available for emotional support when they need it. You may want to suggest doing things together that enable your friend to replace time spent getting stoned with other activities.
- Let them know there are lots of different ways to get help for cannabis and mental health problems. Some of the options include education, counselling, therapy, and self-help groups.
- Reassure your friend that professional help is confidential.
- Suggest they contact some support services for confidential help, support or advice (see page two of this fact sheet for contacts).
- If the first service they contact isn't helpful, encourage your friend to keep trying until they find someone they feel comfortable talking to.
- Encourage your friend to talk to other trusted friends or family members to get support.

If they don't want your help:

If they don't think they need help or have a problem with cannabis let them know you are available to talk in the future. Do not nag, blackmail, lecture or guilt them into changing. These tactics are unlikely to work. Do not use cannabis or other drugs with them, or cover up and make excuses for them.

If the person continues to use cannabis, you could encourage them to seek out information e.g. highsnlows.com.au about ways to reduce the risks associated with cannabis use.

Want to speak to someone about cannabis?

If you want to speak to someone about cannabis and what it is doing to you or a friend you could try calling one of the support services below. These services are confidential and the people you talk to understand what you might be going through.

Cannabis Information and Helpline 1800 30 40 50

DirectLine 1800 888 236

Want to find more information?

If you want to go online, the following sites are full of good information and advice.

www.highsnlows.com.au – information and stories about cannabis and mental health

www.headspace.org.au – mental health services designed for young people

www.ysas.org.au – aims to improve the health and wellbeing of young people affected by the use of alcohol and other drugs