

cannabis withdrawal syndrome: patient information

Many regular cannabis users are likely to experience some withdrawal symptoms, while others may have little or no discomfort upon stopping use. For many users, the psychological symptoms are most difficult. There are also a number of physical symptoms that can be uncomfortable but are not dangerous.

common symptoms	less common symptoms
anger	chills
aggression	stomach pains
irritability	shakiness
nervousness/anxiety	sweating
appetite changes	depressed mood
restlessness	
sleep difficulties	
strange dreams	

Withdrawal symptoms are actually signs that the body is recovering and readapting to being cannabis free, therefore withdrawal symptoms are positive signs of recovery. Generally speaking, withdrawal symptoms resolve within five to ten days. Some symptoms like developing good sleeping patterns generally take longer.

quitting tobacco at the same time

Many people who smoke cannabis, either smoke tobacco or mix tobacco in with their cannabis. If you mix tobacco in with cannabis, it is likely that some of your withdrawal symptoms are caused by tobacco withdrawal.

Being in withdrawal from both doesn't mean that it will be twice as hard or bad and research tells us that it is better to quit both tobacco and cannabis simultaneously. If you are worried about your ability to quit both tobacco and cannabis at the same time, discuss possible nicotine replacement treatments with your doctor.

treatment options

There are a number of drug treatment options available in Australia. Some treatment options include counselling, support groups and education groups. You can also call the Cannabis Information and Helpline on 1800 30 40 50 or contact your local Alcohol Drug Information Service. At this stage, there are no medications available to help specifically with cannabis withdrawal, although your GP may recommend medication for other issues like low mood or sleeping difficulties. This will depend on your individual situation.

monitoring withdrawal symptoms

You might like to copy and use this table to monitor your withdrawal symptoms over the course of one week by placing a tick in the space next to each symptom. You will see that the number and severity of symptoms reduce quite quickly.

symptoms	mild	moderate	severe
depressed mood			
changes in appetite			
sleep difficulty			
sweating/night sweats			
cravings for cannabis			
restlessness/irritability			
aggression/anger			
headaches			

managing withdrawal symptoms

Develop a withdrawal management plan with a friend, family member or counsellor.

This may include:

- remove all smoking implements to remove temptation
- make an extra effort to eat well and do some gentle exercise
- write down the pros and cons of quitting, and display this somewhere where you will look at it often
- don't plan too much for the first few weeks after quitting
- find a friend or someone who will support you and help distract you from the urges
- try not to beat yourself up if you have a lapse
- plan a reward for yourself once you have achieved your goal

pros of quitting/cutting down	cons of quitting/cutting down
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6

Make an appointment to see your doctor to monitor your progress and develop strategies to consolidate and build on your success.

NCPIIC is currently conducting a [Cannabis withdrawal study](#) on the experiences associated with cannabis use and quitting. Please contact Dr David Allsop for more information and eligibility criteria (cannabiswithdrawal@unsw.edu.au).

For more help or information please visit the National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre website at: www.ncpic.org.au or call the Cannabis Information and Helpline on **1800 30 40 50**