

Cannabis Fact or Fiction?

Sort the statements below into fact or fiction...

Smoking cannabis is better for you than smoking cigarettes.

Cannabis can make you more vulnerable.

Cannabis is not addictive.

It is safe to drive after using cannabis.

Cannabis comes in different strengths.

Cannabis can make a person pass out.

Cannabis cleans your lungs.

Most young people have tried or are using cannabis.

Cannabis contains more than 400 chemicals.

Cannabis can make mental health problems worse.

FACT

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Answers explained...

Cannabis comes in different strengths (FACT): The strength of cannabis can differ from batch to batch and also the type of cannabis which is being used. Because we can't be sure how strong cannabis is when used it can result in unpredictable effects.

Cannabis can make you more vulnerable (FACT): Cannabis is a depressant drug meaning it slows down the messages from your brain to your body. This results in a person being less aware of their surroundings making them more vulnerable to being attacked or taken advantage of in some way.

Cannabis can make a person pass out (FACT): Feeling faint or actually passing out can be due to a sudden change in heart rate or drop in blood pressure caused by cannabis use.

Cannabis can make mental health problems worse (FACT): THC is the psychoactive (meaning it changes how the brain functions), part of cannabis which gets a person "high". THC can negatively affect brain functioning, leading to existing mental health problems becoming worse, particularly for young people. Those under 25 are more at risk of developing mental health problems if using cannabis. This is as cannabis has been shown to affect normal brain growth and development.

Cannabis contains more than 400 chemicals (FACT): Many of the chemicals found in cannabis are harmful to the body. Ammonia is one of these chemicals. Ammonia is produced when the cannabis plant is burnt, this is then inhaled into the lungs. Most will associate ammonia with cleaning products in the home, more specifically as toilet cleaner. Ammonia is a known irritant which can cause lung damage.

FICTION

Answers explained...

Smoking cannabis is better for you than smoking cigarettes (FICTION): Like tobacco, cannabis smoke contains tar, a black sticky substance which sticks to the lungs when inhaled. Tar turns the lungs black and eventually stops them from working properly. Cannabis deposits 4x more tar into the lungs than tobacco smoke.

Cannabis is not addictive (FICTION): Cannabis is psychologically addictive meaning that your brain tells you you want to do something over and over again. Psychological addiction is an emotional or mental dependence on the drug, this can lead to intense cravings and obsessive behaviour.

Cannabis cleans your lungs (FICTION): Cannabis contains a range of chemicals, including tar. Tar sticks to the lungs and turns them black. Tar is the same substance used to make roads and playgrounds. Cannabis therefore does not clean the lungs, it actually does the opposite by turning healthy lungs black.

Most young people have tried or are using cannabis (FICTION): Often young people feel pressured to use cannabis for many reasons, one being to “fit in” as everyone does it. This is not the case, in the UK only 6% of young people had used cannabis (Statista, 2023). Cannabis is also a very strong smelling drug, if one or two people are using it the smell spreads. People then assume there are lots of people using cannabis due to the strength of the smell.

It is safe to drive after using cannabis (FICTION): As cannabis is a depressant drug it slows a person’s reactions down. These slower reactions caused by cannabis use makes driving dangerous, people cannot press the brake or turn the wheel fast enough to react to incidents on the road. If caught drug-driving a person can face a 1 year ban, up to 6 months in prison and an unlimited fine. Punishment can be much more severe if someone is injured or killed.