

Too Scientific; Didn't Understand!

Let me explain!

Cannabis use, the brain & treatment of cannabis addiction

What?

We made a **summary** of previous research. We focused on studies that included people who use a lot of **cannabis** or are **addicted to cannabis** and how this affects their brain.



Topic?

First, we described **how many people** use cannabis and are **addicted to cannabis**, how we **diagnose and treat** cannabis addiction, and whether these treatments are **effective**. All the studies we summarized looked at **brain areas** (e.g., the size of areas), **brain activity** (e.g., how active areas are), and how the brain influences **behavior** (e.g., your focus or memory).

Why?

Summaries like this are important to create an overview of **what we do and do not know yet**. This information is helpful to **educate** people about the harms and benefits of cannabis use, **inform** therapists who treat cannabis addiction, and **identify new research topics** (e.g., studies on new treatment options).



What did we find?

A lot of people use cannabis! There are large differences between countries and men use cannabis more often than women.

People who use cannabis may have **smaller brain areas** involved in thinking and memory. Also, their **brains become more active** when they feel like they want to use cannabis right now (craving).

When you use a lot of cannabis or are addicted to cannabis, your **attention, learning, and memory** can get worse. In some people this will get better again when they stop.

People can be diagnosed with a **cannabis addiction** if they show one or more symptoms indicating that they **cannot control their cannabis use**.

There is **no medication** for cannabis addiction, but people can get **therapy**. In popular therapies, people can **discover why** they use cannabis, **realize when** they use cannabis, and **learn strategies** to avoid using cannabis when they do not want to. Therapy works well for some people, but there is **room for improvement**: about 2 in 3 people who finish therapy will resume use within 6 months.

Important!

There are a lot of **individual differences** in why people use cannabis, how people react to cannabis, and how likely people are to develop a cannabis addiction. Starting to use cannabis at a younger age, using high THC cannabis, and using a lot can increase the likelihood of negative outcomes, including addiction.



Kroon, E., Kuhns, L., Hoch, E., & Cousijn, J. (2020). Heavy cannabis use, dependence and the brain: a clinical perspective. *Addiction*, 115(3), 559-572. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14776>



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