

Advice for Parents & Caregivers

Cannabis Explained



Before we start

If cannabis is on your mind, that's worth paying attention to. Something being common doesn't mean it has no impact, especially for younger people.

This guide isn't here to exaggerate or dismiss concerns. It's here to help you understand how cannabis use looks today, and where harm can quietly build over time.

Who this guide is for

This is for parents and carers who want clear, grounded information about cannabis and practical ways to reduce harm through calm, open conversations rather than fear.

Why this matters

Modern cannabis is much stronger and more varied than it used to be. Regular use can affect mood, motivation, and mental health, particularly in children and teenagers.

What cannabis is

Cannabis contains compounds that affect the brain, most notably THC. It can be smoked, vaped, or eaten in food or sweets, which can make effects harder to predict.

What cannabis does

THC affects perception, memory, coordination, and mood. Some people feel relaxed, while others experience anxiety or paranoia.

With regular use, cannabis can reduce motivation, affect concentration, and make emotional regulation harder over time.

What we see in real life

In real life, cannabis use often starts casually and blends into daily routines. Because it doesn't always cause dramatic behaviour, changes can be easy to miss.

Access: Cannabis is widely available and often shared within friendship groups. Vapes and edibles have increased access, especially for younger people, because they are easier to hide and don't smell the same as smoking.

Strength and variety: Many modern cannabis products contain much higher THC levels than in the past. Different strains, vapes, and edibles can affect people very differently, even at similar doses.

How it's commonly used: Cannabis is often used regularly rather than occasionally. Some people use it to relax, sleep, or cope with stress, which can turn use into a habit rather than a choice.

Why it slips under the radar: Reduced motivation, tiredness, or emotional flatness can look like typical teenage behaviour, stress, or low mood rather than cannabis effects.

The hidden risks: Regular use during adolescence is linked to anxiety, low mood, memory problems, and increased risk of mental health difficulties, particularly for those already vulnerable.

Why early conversations matter: Talking early about frequency, reasons for use, and impact on daily life can reduce harm more than waiting until patterns are firmly set.

What's changed and what people often miss

Vapes and edibles can delay effects, leading people to take more than intended. Stronger products mean reactions can be more intense and less predictable.

Why harm happens

Harm often develops through frequent use, using cannabis to cope with stress or anxiety, high THC strength, or mixing with alcohol.

How to talk to your child about this

Avoid minimising or catastrophising. Focus on how cannabis fits into daily life, school, friendships, and wellbeing rather than labels or assumptions.

Peer pressure and the need to fit in

Cannabis use is often normalised in social groups. Wanting to belong or avoid standing out can influence decisions more than curiosity or risk awareness.

When to be concerned

Changes in motivation, increased anxiety, withdrawal from interests, memory problems, or use that feels hard to stop are signs it's time to seek advice. Trust patterns over single moments.

A final note

Something can feel familiar and still have an impact. Staying calm, informed, and available helps reduce harm more than confrontation ever will.

Educational use only. Not medical advice. If someone is unwell or at risk, seek professional medical help or call 999 in an emergency.