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How Long Does Withdrawal From Marijuana Last?

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Medically reviewed by a
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Cannabis (marijuana) is the most commonly used illicit drug. For many years, marijuana has been considered a [soft drug](#), exempt from the usual concerns about addiction. However, recent research has shown that cannabis withdrawal can and does occur when [heavy pot smokers](#) discontinue its use. As a result, the diagnostic criteria for cannabis withdrawal is included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5).

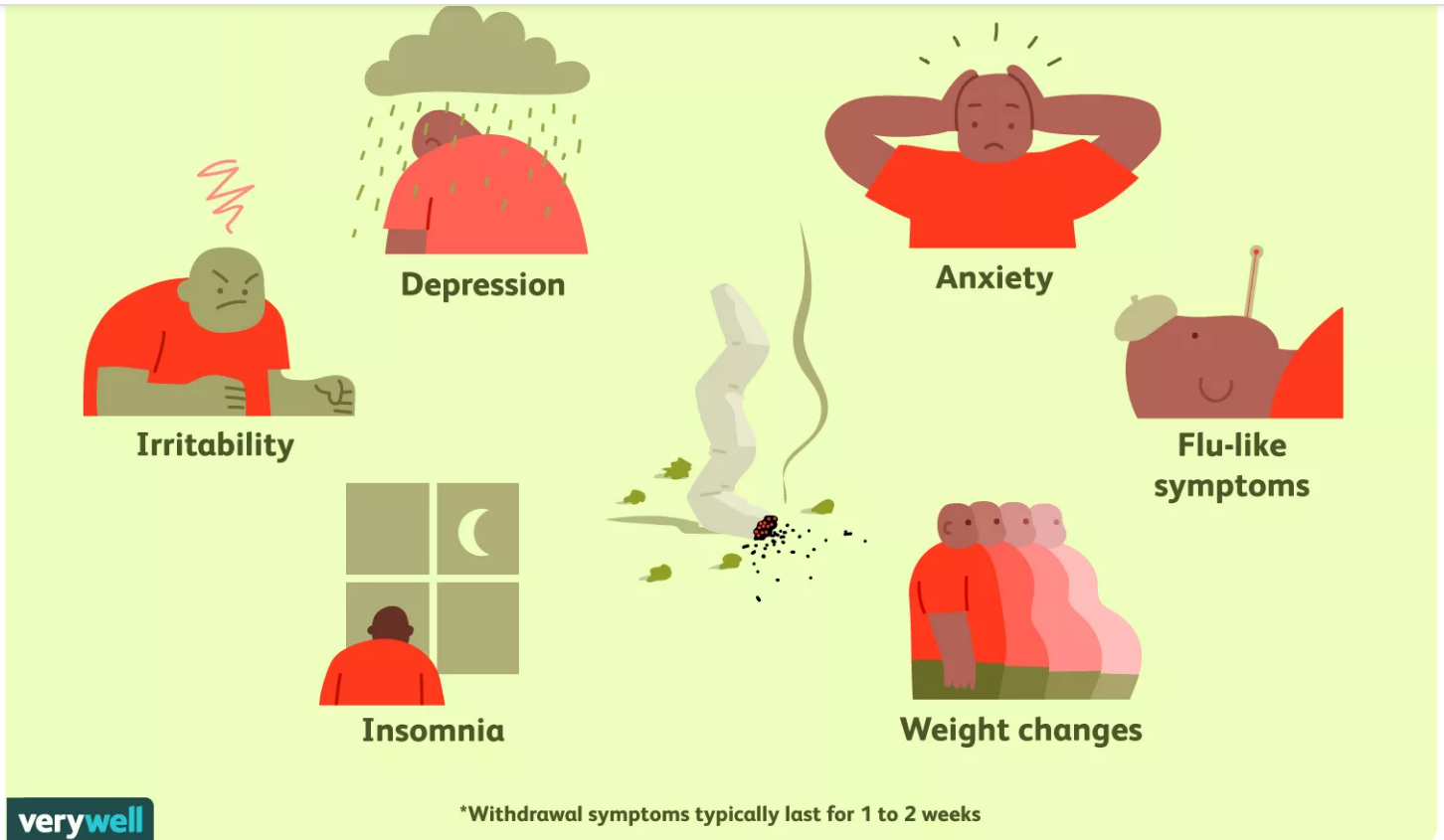


Illustration by JR Bee, Verywell

Overview

If you have been smoking pot heavily for at least a few months—whether as a regular pattern, in binges, or if you have become [addicted](#)—you may experience cannabis withdrawal if you abruptly stop smoking.

A Duke University study of 496 adult [marijuana smokers](#) who tried to quit found that 95.5 percent of them experienced at least one withdrawal symptom while 43.1 percent experienced more than one symptom. The number of symptoms the participants experienced was significantly linked to how often and how much the subjects smoked prior to trying to quit.

Those who were daily smokers experienced the most symptoms, but even those who reported using marijuana less than weekly experienced some withdrawal symptoms of moderate intensity.

Marijuana withdrawal symptoms are not life-threatening—their main danger is causing someone who really wants or needs to quit cannabis to fail.



Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS).

Related: [Why PAWS Can Be a Barrier to Recovery](#)

Signs and Symptoms

One person's experience of cannabis withdrawal might be quite different from another person's, and the severity depends on a whole host of factors, including frequency of use as well as overall health. However, there are certain common symptoms that usually occur within 24 to 72 hours of stopping heavy use.

Cravings

Although many regular smokers of marijuana do not believe they are addicted to the drug, many former marijuana users report drug cravings in the [early days of abstinence](#). This is a hallmark of addiction, whether it's heroin, alcohol, gambling, or [sex addiction](#). In one study, 75.7 percent of participants trying to quit reported an intense craving for marijuana.

Irritability

Irritability can range from mild and relatively easily controlled annoyance to excessive anger and even aggression. This is a normal reaction to withdrawing from marijuana.

If the irritability lasts for more than a week, it is a good idea to seek support from a doctor, drug counselor, and/or psychologist, as it may be part of another issue that your cannabis use was masking.

More than half of those who try to quit marijuana report mood swings, irritability or anxiety. Others report aggression, nervousness, restlessness and a loss of concentration.

Anxiety

[Anxiety](#) can be a symptom of both cannabis intoxication and cannabis withdrawal. The distinctive paranoid feelings that occur when high on marijuana are well known among



of drug withdrawal.

If you continue to feel anxious after a week of discontinuing cannabis, see a doctor. Cannabis use can sometimes cause substance-induced anxiety disorders, and there may have been an existing anxiety problem before you started using cannabis.

In rare cases of withdrawal, anxiety can become paranoia, which may be a symptom of a more serious mental health problem, such as [schizophrenia](#).

If you experience extended paranoia, especially if you also experience [hallucinations](#) or [delusions](#), it is very important to be properly assessed by a doctor with expertise in substance use disorders, such as an [American Board of Addiction Medicine](#) (ABAM)-certified physician or a psychiatrist.

Anxiety and paranoia are easily confused with each other, but with the proper [diagnosis](#), they are both treatable.

Depression

Depression, or feeling an excessively unhappy mood accompanied by several [other symptoms](#) like decreased interest in daily activities and difficulty concentrating is another possibility of cannabis withdrawal.

Occasional depressed feelings are natural, but it is not unusual for people coming off cannabis to also become more aware of some of the negative consequences of their drug use, which can be quite depressing.

For example, many people who cease marijuana after using for several years can feel they have wasted a considerable part of their life. These feelings are normal and can often be used to bring about positive changes you want to make in your life.

If the feelings of depression don't lift after a week, or if making changes in your life seems overwhelming, seek help from your doctor or a drug counselor. As with other mood changes, depression can be substance-induced or pre-existing to your cannabis use, and it is treatable.



to your nearest emergency room.

Sleep Problems

An estimated 46.9 percent of former pot smokers report sleep disruption problems, including [insomnia](#) (trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep), unusually vivid or disturbing dreams, and night sweats during cannabis withdrawal.

Insomnia symptoms after you stop smoking weed can last a few days or a couple of weeks. Some smokers find that they can experience occasional sleeplessness for a few months after quitting

Others who have quit smoking report having "using dreams" in which they dream they smoke marijuana. Frequent, vivid dreams typically begin about a week after quitting and can last for about a month before tapering off. Although some former users have reported having these types of dreams years after they stopped smoking pot.

Headaches

Not everyone who stops smoking marijuana experiences headaches, but for those who do, the headaches can be very intense, especially during the first few days after quitting.

Headaches, [like most other symptoms](#) of withdrawing [from marijuana use](#), will usually begin one to three days after quitting and will peak two to six days after stopping. Symptoms usually fade after two weeks, but some former smokers report continued symptoms for several weeks or even months later.

Other Physical Symptoms

Physical symptoms of marijuana withdrawal tend to be less intense, peak sooner and fade more quickly than the psychological symptoms associated with quitting. The frequency and amount of marijuana the smoker used prior to stopping affects the severity and length of the withdrawals, which may include:

[Stomach pain](#)

Changes in appetite

Weight loss or gain



Coping and Relief

Making a few healthy lifestyle changes and employing some coping strategies can help you get through this period of withdrawal:

Stay physically active to help ease bodily tension.

Let friends and family members know that you need support and/or space.

Avoid situations that you find anxiety-provoking, such as loud, crowded parties.

Practice relaxation techniques, such as meditation.

Establish sleep rituals and avoid caffeine too close to bedtime.

Warnings

Just as alcoholics who are trying to quit drinking may pick up a drink to relieve the [symptoms of alcohol withdrawal](#), marijuana users may light up a joint to relieve the discomfort they experience when they try to stop smoking. This can be a serious problem for smokers who need to quit to keep their job or who have been court-ordered into treatment.

One study found that 70.4 percent of users trying to quit smoking marijuana relapsed to relieve the withdrawal symptoms.

Long-Term Treatment

In many cases, the symptoms will dissipate with time and can be treated without medical attention. However, if your symptoms are lasting for more than a couple of weeks, you should see your doctor or mental health professional.

Make sure you tell your doctor that marijuana withdrawal is playing a role in how you are feeling. If you just say you are depressed or anxious, you may be prescribed medication, like [benzodiazepines](#), that can present its own set of addiction issues. Fortunately, many non-addictive pharmacologic options exist for anxiety, as well as non-drug treatments, such as [cognitive behavioral therapy \(CBT\)](#).

Resources



how much and how often you have been smoking, these symptoms could become intense enough to drive you to relapse to find relief.

You don't have to do it on your own. Seek help from your healthcare provider to deal with the physical symptoms of withdrawal or seek help from a support group like [Marijuana Anonymous](#) to handle the psychological symptoms.

A Word From Verywell

Experiencing the symptoms of cannabis withdrawal can be unpleasant and may temporarily interfere with performance at work, school, and/or daily life. While withdrawing from marijuana use can present challenges, remember that what you are going through will pass. Be patient. Making life changes is always challenging, but with the right support, can be transformative.

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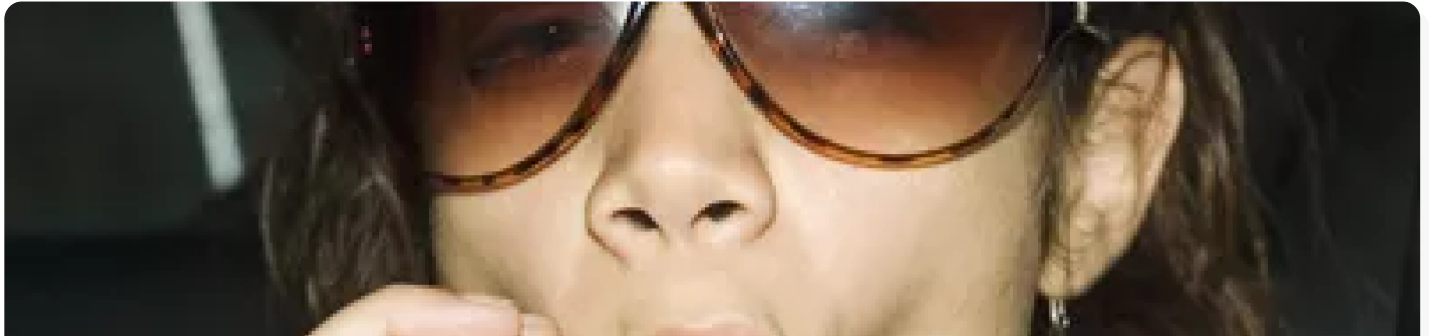
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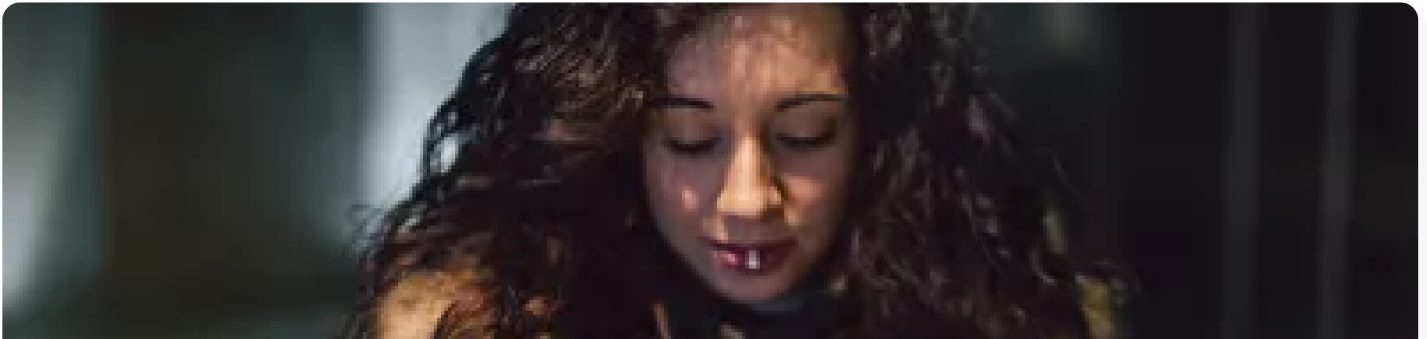
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