

## Detoxing from Marijuana



## Marijuana Anonymous

### 12 Step Program For Marijuana Addicts

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### What is Detoxing?

Detoxing is the way in which your body gets rid of the toxins accumulated from years of using. It happens the first few days or weeks after getting clean and/or sober. It is also the very beginning of getting used to dealing with reality and real feelings with no numbing agent.

### Can there be physical effects from quitting marijuana?

In spite of numerous years of being told that there are no physiological effects from marijuana addiction, many of our recovering members have had definite withdrawal symptoms. Whether the causes are physical or psychological, the results are physical. Others have just had emotional and mental changes as they stop using their drug of choice. There is no way of telling before quitting who will be physically uncomfortable and who will not. Most members have only minor physical discomfort if any at all. This pamphlet is for those who are having trouble and wonder what's happening to them.

### Why do some effects last so long?

Unlike most other drugs, including alcohol, THC (the active chemical in marijuana) is stored in the fat cells and therefore takes longer to fully clear the body than with any other common drug. This means that some parts of the body still retain THC even after a couple of months, rather than just the couple of days or weeks for water soluble drugs.

### Can this affect a drug test?

The experiences of some members have shown that if you quit marijuana and expect to take a drug test you should not go on a crash diet at the same time. Fasting, or a crash diet, can re-lease the THC into the bloodstream very rapidly and can give a positive reading. This has happened to several of our members, but each time only with crash

diets and major weight loss, not with just eating less than usual.

### What are some of the more common symptoms?

By far the most common symptom of withdrawal is insomnia. This can last from a few nights of practically no sleep at all, up to a few months of occasional sleeplessness. The next most common symptom is depression (that is, if you're not euphoric), and next are nightmares and vivid dreams. Marijuana use tends to dampen the dreaming mechanism, so that when you do get clean the dreams come back with a crash. They can be vivid color, highly emotional dreams or nightmares, even waking up then coming back to the same dream. The very vivid, every night dreams usually don't start for a about a week or so. They last for about a month at most and then taper off. "Using" dreams (dreams involving the use of marijuana) are very common, and although they're not as vivid or emotional as at first, they last for years and are just considered a normal part of recovery. The fourth most common symptom is anger. This can range from a slow burning rage to constant irritability to sudden bursts of anger when least expected: anger at the world, anger at loved ones, anger at oneself, anger at being an addict and having to get clean. Emotional jags are very common, with emotions bouncing back and forth between depression, anger, and euphoria. Occasionally experienced is a feeling of fear or anxiety, a loss of the sense of humor, decreased sex drive, or increased sex drive. Most all of these symptoms fade to normal emotions by three months. Loss of concentration for the first week or month is also very common and this sometimes affects the ability to learn for a very short while.

## What about physical symptoms?

The most common physical symptom is headaches. For those who have them, they can last for a few weeks up to a couple of months, with the first few days being very intense. The next most common physical symptom is night sweats, sometimes to the point of having to change night clothes. They can last from a few nights to a month or so. Sweating is one of the body's natural ways of getting rid of toxins. Hand sweats are very common and are often accompanied by an unpleasant smell from the hands. Body odor is enough in many instances to require extra showers or baths. Coughing up phlegm is another way the body cleans itself. This can last for a few weeks to well over six months.

One third of the addicts who responded to a questionnaire on detoxing said they had eating problems for the first few days and some for up to six weeks. Their main symptoms were loss of appetite, sometimes enough to lose weight temporarily, digestion problems or cramps after eating, and nausea, occasionally enough to vomit (only for a day or two). Most of the eating problems were totally gone before the end of a month.

The next most common physical symptoms experienced were tremors or shaking and dizziness. Less frequently experienced were kidney pains, impotency, hormone changes or imbalances, low immunity or chronic fatigue, and some minor eye problems that resolved at around two months. There have been cases of addicts having more severe detox symptoms, however this is rare. For intense discomfort, see a doctor, preferably one who is experienced with detoxing.

## How can I reduce discomfort?

For some of the milder detoxing symptoms, a few home remedies have proven to be useful:

- Hot soaking baths can help the emotions as well as the body.
- Drink plenty of water and clear liquids, just like for the flu.
- Cranberry juice has been used effectively for years by recovery houses to help purify and cleanse the body.
- Really excessive sweating can deplete the body of potassium, a necessary mineral. A few foods high in potassium are melons, bananas, citrus fruits, green leafy vegetables, and tomatoes.
- Eliminate fat from the diet until digestion is better.
- Greatly reduce or eliminate caffeine until the sleep pattern is more normal or the shakes are gone.
- The old fashioned remedy for insomnia, a glass of warm milk before bedtime, helps some people.
- Exercise not only helps depression and other unpleasant emotions, it helps the body speed up the healing process.

## *From "HOW IT WORKS" in the meeting format of MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS*

Do not be discouraged, none of us are saints.

Our program is not easy, but it is simple.

We strive for progress, not perfection.

Our experiences, before and after we entered recovery, teach us three important ideas:

- That we are marijuana addicts and cannot manage our own lives;
- That probably no human power can relieve our addiction; and
- That our Higher Power can and will if sought.