

looking after a friend on cannabis

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Using cannabis can have unpredictable effects.

Some of the unwanted physical and psychological effects that may be experienced by a person when they are 'high' on cannabis may include:

- nausea and vomiting
- anxiety, panic and paranoia

If you are with someone who is affected by cannabis in this way, you can help.

what can you do if someone is physically sick?

'Greening out' is a term that refers to the situation where people feel sick after smoking cannabis. People can go pale and sweaty, feel dizzy, nauseous and may even start vomiting. They usually feel they have to lie down straight away.

You can assist them by:

- taking them to a quiet place with fresh air
- sitting them in a comfortable position
- giving them a glass of water or something sweet (such as juice or a piece of fruit)

If the person feels so sick that they start to vomit:

- stay with them
- lie them down on their side, not on their back, so they don't choke on their vomit
- keep them in a quiet, safe spot where you can monitor them

If someone is physically sick it is important that you **never** leave them on their own, not even for the shortest time. Suffocating on vomit is a very real threat and can lead to an otherwise unnecessary death.

what can you do if someone is experiencing panic attacks, anxiety or paranoia?

Unwanted psychological effects can range from depression to anxiety, which can go on to produce panic attacks and paranoia. Although this can be frightening for the person, most of the time these effects can be managed through reassurance.

If someone you know experiences these problems after they have used cannabis, here are some things you can do to assist them:

- try to calm the person down
- reassure them that these feelings will pass in time
- take them to a safe and quiet place and stay with them
- let them know that you are here to help them. If there is something you can do for them, do it
- if they do not calm down, try to distract them with other topics of discussion

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if nothing you do is helping

If there is nothing you can do, and the person continues to feel bad or their condition gets worse, then it is important to get more help. Call 000 or take them to get medical help so that they can be treated quickly and safely.

how can you help prevent this from happening again?

After the effects of cannabis wear off, talk to your friend about what happened, how it affected you and those around you, and how this can be prevented in the future.

As a friend, you can do the following things that may help prevent this happening again:

- if your friend has a mental illness such as depression, anxiety or schizophrenia, encourage them not to use cannabis or any other drug, unless prescribed by a doctor
- encourage your friend to seek help from their GP or counsellor about their cannabis use if this happens regularly
- remind them what happened the last time they used cannabis
- suggest they avoid bingeing or polydrug use (using more than one drug at the same time), or anything that will intensify the effects of cannabis
- become involved in other activities with them that do not involve drug use

For more information please see the NCPIC fast facts booklet [‘concerned about someone’s cannabis use? Fast facts on how to help’](#).