



Understanding Tolerance, Dependence, and Withdrawal

Tolerance

Tolerance is a person's diminished response to a drug, which occurs when the drug is used repeatedly, and the body adapts to the continued presence of the drug. Which means the drug at its current dose has stopped working as effectively as it once did.

Why it Happens: THC causes tolerance through repeated activation of CB1 receptors which can lead to events inside the brain cell causing a weakened response to THC and then the removal of CB1 receptors forces a person to need to consume more THC to get the same effect. Over time and with continued use, it may seem impossible to get an effect at all.

How to Manage: Time for a "T-Break"! One of the most common ways to lower your cannabis tolerance is to take a break from using cannabis. These are often called "T breaks." Even though THC can remove CB1 receptors, they can recover over time and return to their previous levels. T-Breaks can go from a few days to 2 weeks.

- Alternatives to T-Breaks:
 - Use cannabis products with a higher CBD-to-THC ratio
 - Tightly control your doses
 - Use cannabis less often

Dependence

The definition of Cannabis Dependence contains three critical elements:

- Preoccupation with the acquisition of marijuana
- Compulsive use of marijuana
- Relapse to or recurrent use of the marijuana.

Why it Happens: THC triggers your brain to release large amounts of dopamine, a naturally occurring "feel good" chemical. It's what gives you a pleasant high. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, this dopamine cycle may also explain why cannabis users can develop cannabis use disorder.



How to Manage:

- Seek Help. For 24/7 help finding treatment, please contact 1-844-REACHNJ (1-844-732-2465)
- When you are feeling moderate to low cravings try to center yourself:
 - Mediate: ride the craving... notice it, let it go
 - Reflect: what are you feeling? Physically what is happening?
 - Identify: look for patterns in cravings (time, place, feelings, etc)
 - Learn: what helps you ride them out?
 - Plan: no blame, no shame... just plan for the next craving.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal is the physical and mental symptoms that occur after stopping or reducing intake of a drug. Withdrawal effects from a substance are often the opposite of the effects that the substance creates. Cannabis withdrawal isn't necessarily as intense as withdrawal from alcohol or other substances, but it can still be quite uncomfortable

Cannabis Withdrawal Symptoms

- Mood swings
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Cognitive impairment
- Diminished appetite
- Stomach problems, including nausea
- Insomnia
- Intense, vivid dreams

Managing Cannabis Withdrawal

- Hydration and rest.
- OTC medications to deal with headaches and nausea
- Exercise and fresh air
- Keep yourself accountable - remove any cannabis and notify those in your friends and family who will help keep you accountable.
- Cannabis withdrawal symptoms usually only last for 72 hours.

In an emergency, call 911. For 24/7 help finding treatment, please contact 1-844-REACHNJ (1-844-732-2465)