THE TRUTH ABOUT MARIJUANA WITHDRAWAL
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The Straight Dope on Marijuana Addiction and Withdrawals

You know it, and I know it…. The popular notion that marijuana is not addictive is total B.S.

Sure SOME people can smoke recreationally, just like some people can party harder than Keith Richards for decades, then wake up one day and leave it all behind.

But around 9% of regular smokers get hooked, and when you get hooked, it sneaks up on you…

It’s like a boa constrictor slowly wrapping around and squeezing you, except you don’t notice until you can’t breathe.

I should know…

I was hooked for years…

The Bottom Line: Marijuana Addiction is Rare but VERY Real

And it’s being whitewashed…

Because dealers, growers and lobbyists and greedy politicians are hopping on the marijuana gravy train…and cashing in.

They don’t give a damn about people like you and me.

It’s all about the Benjamins.

And don’t even get me started on Stoner activists who deny the facts despite mountains of scientific evidence that weed CAN and DOES cause real problems for real people every single day.

They seem to think “If it doesn’t happen to me, it doesn’t happen”

END RANT

I wrote this little book to get the truth out about weed addiction and withdrawal. It’s written from my personal experience and the experience of the 1000’s of people who I’ve come in contact with over the last 8 years.

Let’s get down to business by look at what Marijuana addiction is really like and talk about withdrawal in detail

Thanks for Reading

John Mckee
Am I Really Addicted to Marijuana
You’re either reading this because you think you might have a problem
with marijuana or you are worried about somebody you know.

Be honest with yourself and it’s pretty easy to figure out:

Do these sound familiar for you?:

1) I’ve developed a tolerance to weed and need to smoke more weed,
more often to get the same high that I used to.
2) I experience withdrawal symptoms and smoke to avoid them. We’ll
cover a full list of withdrawal symptoms in the coming pages
3) I smoke more weed than you plan to in quantity or frequency.
4) I can’t cut down or quit, even though you want to

Simple...Right

Take a moment and reflect on your weed use.

When you can’t quit because you avoid withdrawal or just can’t handle
life without it being stoned...that’s a sign of a problem.

Another clear sign is breaking promises about when you will smoke or
when you will quit.

When you break promises with yourself can really kill your confidence
and self-worth.

So be honest with yourself and take a moment to reflect.

Admitting you abuse marijuana it takes courage.

Are you are smoking it when you shouldn’t be? During your workday, or
while driving?

I’m not saying weed impairs your ability to do these things, but the
consequences for getting a DUI or losing your job are huge.

Logically, you just shouldn’t do it.

Ask yourself this: Am I smoking weed to avoid problems in life?

Weed can be an escape and way to feel nothing instead of feeling
depressed, anxious, or angry.

I’ve been there and back. Believe me when I tell you that you can turn
it around.

With the right tools and a proven blueprint, quitting weed is even easier
than you think.
Why Marijuana Addiction is Becoming More Common

Marijuana addiction is becoming common because the weed is getting way stronger, easier to find, and finally being talked about.

In the 90’s weed had about 7.5% potency for top-shelf buds. In 2013, only 20 years later that has jumped to 16%. More than double the strength!!!

High end weed today can be as high as 30% THC.

Concentrates like budder, wax, snot, bho... are very pure. Many samples are testing at greater than 80% THC.

This aint your grandpa’s weed.

Think of it this way, a ¼ gram of budder is the equivalent of smoking 2.5 grams of top quality bud in the 90’s and pretty close to 5 grams in the 70s and 80s.

It’s becoming easier and easier to take in massive amounts of THC. It hits harder and faster, creating a stronger high.

A big dab of concentrate is like smoking multiple joints in seconds.

Strong weed and concentrates are making weeds more available and easier to get hooked on.

More People Than Ever Are Seeking Help

Between 1992 and 2009, the number of marijuana users who received treatment for dependence or abuse rose by more than 140%.

It can be hard to admit you need help, and going to a treatment center isn’t always feasible.

QuitMarijuana.Org was built to help you quit weed. It is the only online resource built to help you quit weed safely and easily.

The Physiology and Psychology of Weed Addiction and Withdrawals

It’s science time.

We are going to start off with how weed effect you physically and psychologically.
The Physiology Of Weed Addiction
Marijuana affects your brain by mimicking the neurochemicals in your body.

These neurochemicals are described as *endogenous cannabinoids*, which you may know as *endocannabinoids*.

Neurochemicals known as anandamides aid the transmission of messages between nerve cells. This is what enables the brain to process memories, emotions, thoughts, and information it receives through the senses.

**THC present in marijuana mimics anandamide**, which is the endocannabinoid that activates CB1 receptors. CB1 receptors respond to the psychoactive effects of marijuana.

Weed and the Amygdala

The *amygdala* is the hotbed of emotions in the brain. One of the many functions of the amygdala is to awaken a sense of newness in us when we encounter a new situation or see a new object etc.

When you smoke weed, it triggers cannabinoid stimulation. This is why even day to day things start to seem fresh and interesting.

It also explains the popular association of marijuana with creativity and intellectual activity.

**The problem is that chronic weed use can cause down-regulation of the natural receptors.** Since the body gets the anandamide from smoking weed. It doesn’t need to produce it itself.

Continued overstimulation can even dismantle the receptors and deplete them severely.

Hacking Your Reward System

Marijuana use also messes the ‘Reward System’ of the brain.

Part of your brain known as the *dopamine reinforcement pathway (DRP)* or the reward reinforcement pathway contains high levels of CB1 receptors and endocannabinoids.

**The DRP is stimulated heavily by marijuana, significantly increasing the amount of dopamine in the brain after smoking.**

The DRP is stimulated by any rewarding activity. It’s key to our survival. It makes sure we eat and procreate by releasing dopamine so that we experience pleasure.
Dopamine encourages us to repeat this activity again to achieve the same feeling. This is why the urge to keep smoking weed can be so hard to resist, despite the negative consequences.

Finally, endocannabinoids also saturate the fat cells and remain in your system for a long time. If you smoke marijuana regularly, it can still remain in your brains for up to 4 months, even when you have stopped smoking.

In my experience, I know a couple cases of people failing a drug test more than 60 Days after they last smoked. Not many...but a couple.

Psychology
While weed is a relatively safe when used responsibly, it doesn’t mean the marijuana is 100% safe for all users.

Because marijuana was illegal for so long, we are just starting to learn about its effects and be able to study them scientifically.

I’ve been studying weed addiction and withdrawal for more than 10 years.

If I’ve learned anything, it’s this: Marijuana effects everyone differently

Smoking weed can cause panic attacks in some people. For others, it prevents them from having panic attacks. Another set of people may experience panic attacks during withdrawal.

Smoking weeds can alleviate mild depression. On the flip-side in larger or more frequent doses it can increase the feeling of depression.

Everyone has different brain chemistry, so everyone will experience weed differently.

This is important:

The psychological craving of marijuana can be stronger than the physical withdrawal\(^1\).

When your brain wants something badly, you need to learn the right techniques to fight your urges and conquer your addiction.

The Truth About Marijuana Withdrawal

The simple concept that quitting weed can trigger withdrawal symptoms is relatively new...

There was basically no research or information on withdrawal 20 years ago.

When I quit smoking weed, I was one of the first people to write about marijuana withdrawal online and to study the symptoms and solutions.

I’ve gathered all my notes and the latest research on withdrawal on these next pages.

Not everyone is going to experience every symptom. In fact, some people can quit without any symptoms. I’m just laying them all out for you so you can be prepared when you quit.

With the legality of marijuana changing, I am certain you will see a lot of scientific studies that show the full range and severity of symptoms.

What we do know is that marijuana withdrawal is forceful enough to make long term abstinence difficult for regular users.

One of the pillars of quitting effectively is to know your enemy.

Marijuana Withdrawal Symptoms:

Anxiety

Withdrawing from marijuana can cause anxiety. Mild anxiety symptoms all the way to full blown panic attacks are possible.

Some people, who get caught off guard, end up in the Emergency Room from a panic attack.

When I talk to people about anxiety and withdrawal, I’ve found that if you smoke to escape, or smoke to treat anxiety, the anxiety during withdrawal may be a little tougher.

If you started smoking weed in your teens and smoked heavily, you have a higher chance of developing anxiety disorder in adulthood than people who didn’t smoke.
The anxiety symptoms are worst in the first week and then gradually fade relatively quickly at first, then gradually for one to three months.

**Irritability and Mood Swings**
Mood swings are common during marijuana withdrawal.

**Remember the Amygdala?**
It’s not very happy you have taken away its THC. Your brain is going to need to adjust to not having its CB1 receptors tickled constantly.

You may cry, feel depressed, or have a very short temper and you may cycle through all of these emotions quickly.

This is good. This is the REAL you coming back.

The irritability is most noticeable after the first week and gradually fades towards the one month mark.

If you’ve got family or roommates that you live with, give them a heads up, and they’ll typically go easy on you during the first 30 days.

These effects usually subside 3 to 4 months after your quit date.

**Low Tolerance to Stress**
We all have a built in system to deal with stress...

...AKA the ‘fight or flight’ response.

It’s useful for emergency situations, but **withdrawing from weed can put the whole fight or flight response system out of whack.**

When you get stressed out very easily, it effects your ability to quit. The more stressed out you are, the worse your decision making skills and the harder it is to say ‘no’ to yourself or others.

Just like anxiety, there is a link between marijuana and low-stress tolerance. Low stress tolerance can cause marijuana use and relapse and marijuana withdrawal causes low stress tolerance. ²

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You are going to need to monitor and control your stress levels through exercise, meditation, or other activities.

Some of the best results I’ve seen come from mindfulness meditation.

**Insomnia and Fatigue**

Insomnia is the most common symptom of marijuana withdrawal.

This is where you can’t sleep to begin with or you can’t get uninterrupted sleep. The problem is that lack of sleep can affect your overall quality of life by making your tired, fatigued, and restless.

According to research[^3], as much as 50% of marijuana users experience some kind of sleep issues, most commonly insomnia.

And while causality is still not certain (i.e. whether marijuana causes insomnia or not), it definitely exacerbates the condition. Moreover, there is a definite link between how early you start using marijuana and insomnia.

For the most part, insomnia will only be a problem for less than a week after quitting, and you may be able to complete to normal in anywhere from 2 weeks to a month. Once again, this depends on a host of factors, including frequency of use and the strength of the substance.

Avoid having nicotine, alcohol, or caffeine before sleep. In fact cut back on these habits as well during marijuana withdrawal as they can seriously aggravate your sleep problems.

In the QuitMarijuana.Org guide, I’ve got a strange secret that can teach to relax, let go, and fall asleep incredibly easily.

**Vivid Dreaming and/or Nightmares**

Most of the dreaming during sleep occurs at a stage known as ‘rapid eye movement’ (REM). This is also where the brain is the most active. But while marijuana is reported to reduce REM sleep, the opposite happens when you quit.

Regular users of marijuana tend to experience an unusual increase in REM sleep upon quitting, which is popularly termed as ‘the REM rebound effect’.

This in turn can lead to vivid dreaming. This withdrawal symptom usually starts 2 or 3 days after a person has taken marijuana and can extend up to 2 months. Nightmares can also be caused in extreme cases.

But remember that REM sleep is not a bad thing as it renews your mind. If too much REM sleep is becoming a problem for you, then one can deal with it in the same as he deals with other sleep issues as discussed above.

As for nightmares, depending on how severe they are and how significantly they are affecting your life, there are several things you can do for treatment. For instance, nightmares can be caused by sleep deprivation and REM sleep, and treating those conditions will reduce nightmares as well.

**Depression**

Research does show that marijuana smokers are likely to get depressed more than nonsmokers. This is especially true for heavy users.

However, the causality factor is still under consideration. Sometimes depression itself leads to marijuana use, and as a result, the depression may increase due to the dulling effects of the drug on the user’s feelings and emotions.

One study⁴ shows that depressive symptoms tend to be higher in individuals who use marijuana as compared to those who don’t.

The very first thing you need to do in order to curb your depression is to avoid situations that can make you depressed. This can be tough for people who start smoking marijuana to deal with a traumatic experience.

Improvement can also be experienced by taking better care of yourself, which includes increasing physical activity that includes both exercise and a hobby you may like.

**Lack of Appetite**

More than 30% of people seeking treatment for marijuana addiction report eating problems for the first few days, and sometimes up to 2-3 months. Top of the list of eating problems caused by marijuana withdrawal is loss of appetite, and sometimes this can cause unhealthy weight loss as well.

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Digestion problems, such as cramps and nausea are also common. Lack of appetite and other digestive problems tend to subside before the end of a month.

Night Sweats
Night sweats are no joke. It’s brutal to wake up covered in sweat, but it happens pretty regularly and fades relatively quickly after the first few days.

Sweating is a natural detoxification and is caused by the brain responding to the change of balance due to lack of cannabinoids that had been introduced through smoking weed.

How Long Does Marijuana Withdrawal Last?
I know I sound like a broken record, but Marijuana withdrawals vary from person to person. The same withdrawal symptom, such as anxiety, can affect two marijuana users in different ways so that one experiences relief almost immediately while other has to get treatment over several weeks.

Since THC is marijuana gets stored in the fat cells, marijuana stays in our system for long time even after we quit smoking it. Keeping this mind, a typical marijuana withdrawal timeline can be described as follows:

First Wave
Once you quit marijuana, withdrawal symptoms will start to take effect after 24 hours to 72 hours. In this first wave of withdrawal, the most common symptoms are:

- Insomnia
- Lack of appetite
- Night Sweats

For many individuals these symptoms peak and level off as soon as they appear so that recovery is completed almost immediate. On average, the first withdrawals symptoms take about 2 weeks to wear off.

Second Wave
From day 3 to day 6, you will generally experience the following symptoms:

- Anxiety
- Anger and irritability
- Restlessness
They peak for 3-4 days and can take up to 3 weeks to wear off.

**Third Wave**
The third stage starts from days 5-6 of quitting and can last for a month. The major symptom at this stage is anger/irritability, and possibly vivid dreaming and nightmares. However, this is the critical stage. You need to stay strong enough and use effective remedies to fight your withdrawal. Otherwise there are strong chances of relapse, wasting your entire 3-4 weeks of abstinence.

Another study\(^5\) displays withdrawal symptoms in the following order:

- Insomnia (Day 1)
- Nervousness (Day 4)
- Physical Symptoms (Day 5)
- Depression (Day 5)
- Loss of appetite (Day 5)
- Restlessness (Day 6)
- Vivid Dreams (Day 11)
- Anger/irritability (Day 14)

So as you can see, there is a predictable framework between the onset of insomnia and extreme mood swings.

**Acute Withdrawal and Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS)**
In clinical terms, withdrawal symptoms can be broadly classified into two categories:

**Acute Withdrawal**

This stage of withdrawal is over in a short period of time. Once a person quits a drug after considerable using, the first few days naturally feel uncomfortable and distressing. This is where you experience the first wave of symptoms as listed above.

Note that while acute withdrawal for marijuana is less dangerous than other substances (it can be life-threatening in the case of barbiturates, benzodiazepines, and even alcohol), the period of acute withdrawal is longer than most substances of abuse, i.e. up to two weeks or even a month.

\(^5\) Time-course of the DSM-5 cannabis withdrawal symptoms in poly-substance abusers. Morten Hesse and Birgitte Thylstrup. 2013. Retrieved from [http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/13/258](http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/13/258)
Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS)

Depending on your history of marijuana use, you may not experience any PAWS symptoms. For others, PAWS can last from 12 to 18 months. Once the acute phase is over, neurochemicals in your brain affected by marijuana addiction or abuse rebound to 80% of their previous levels. This allows the individual to think clearly and move forward in the healing process.

But while most of the symptoms may have subsided, some effects of psychological withdrawal (as listed in the second and third wave above) will still remain.

It is worthy of note that each symptom of post-acute withdrawal lasts for a few days, after which they tend to wear off. Hence, it is all about persisting in your efforts to quit marijuana and regain your mental composure. Hence, you need to exercise patience and perseverance.

Factors that Influence Withdrawal Symptoms

Remember, Weed effects everyone differently.

The length and severity of each withdrawal symptom is different for everyone. Here are some of the factors that determine the severity of withdrawal.

Age and Years of Use

Age obviously plays a major role. For instance, if you have been using marijuana since your teens and now you are 45, then obviously withdrawals will be a lot severe then if you quit a year after starting. Other factors include:

Most Recent Level of Use

If you’ve been smoking 1/8 of bud a day, or ½ gram of oil a day, and you quit cold turkey, you are more likely to experience strong withdrawal symptoms that someone who smokes a ½ joint a day.

As you increase potency and dosage, the probability of withdrawal symptoms increase.

Addiction to Other Drugs

Being addicted to more than just weed can make quitting weed harder. This may sound contrary to some of the “experts”, but my belief is that you have to take it one step at a time.

Quitting everything all at once may be biting off more than you can chew.
If you are drinking heavily, try to cut that out first. It affects your judgement and health far more than weed does.

**An Angry or Violent Personality**

If you already have a violent or angry streak, the anger and irritability caused by withdrawal can increase the risk of violent outbreaks.

It can also increase the probability that you will smoke if you use it to self-medicate from anger.

**Not Creating the Right Support Network**

The people you choose to associate with, and who you tell about quitting can have a big impact on you quitting.

Communicating about what you are going through, and setting expectations with the people who are close to you is something that is often overlooked when you first decide to quit weed.

**Wrong Approach to Quitting and Recovery**

**Here’s the bottom line:** It takes a well thought out plan to quit smoking weed.

**You need to know what to expect.**

That’s why I have written this little book. It’s important to understand what you may experience when you quit weed.

**Overcoming Marijuana Withdrawal Symptoms**

I’ve helped thousands of people quit smoking weed. I’ve also worked with many people who have tried and failed.

**The number one cause of failure is not being prepared.**

When the severity of withdrawal symptoms hits, they can catch you off guard.

At QuitMarijuana.Org, you’ll be able to plot out your own path to success by following a proven blueprint that takes you from start to finish.

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I’ll teach you how to reduce and eliminate withdrawal symptoms like anxiety and insomnia so you can kick your weed addiction to the curb...

It’s time to start living the life you want to live.