

# Cannabis use in ADHD

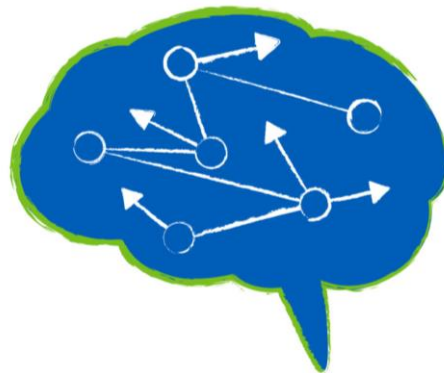
## Barriers to diagnosis and treatment

### Effects on the brain

The recreational use of cannabis is on the rise. While there is limited evidence of harm with experimental, short-term, or infrequent consumption, the effects of regular and long-term use on the brain are well established.

Research suggests that it can contribute to difficulties in the following areas:

- Learning
- Decision-making
- Attention
- Memory
- Impulse inhibition
- Emotional processing
- Motivation
- Motor / bodily control



These functions can also be affected by underlying ADHD.

Although this is a neurodevelopmental condition that begins in childhood, it becomes challenging to determine the cause and / or impact of symptoms when cannabis is used regularly.

An ADHD diagnosis may not be possible if a person is regularly using substances such as drugs.

### How this may affect your assessment and treatment

Unfortunately, we can't add you to our assessment waitlist if you are misusing substances.

We will temporarily discharge you from our service until you have reduced your drug use.

Please understand that it is not because we don't care. We may not be able to provide the right service and support for you until the issue is addressed.

You can contact the charities and communities in this leaflet if you need help with drug use.

We will reinstate your referral once you have reduced your intake.

We may prioritise you on our waiting list, but this will depend on evidence from your GP.

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## Cannabis use in ADHD

**Due to its effects on the mind and body, cannabis is often used to try to control ADHD symptoms.**

It is more common among people with undiagnosed or untreated ADHD.

We understand the desire to manage challenging symptoms using a substance like cannabis, but it is worth looking at other methods. Visit our web service page for our support guides.

**Web** [berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/adhd](https://berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/adhd)

### Prescribing ADHD medication

If medication is suitable for you following a diagnosis, then please remember:

- During your first medical appointment, the service will assess your physical and mental health, driving safety, and substance misuse
- We can only assist with the initiation of ADHD medication when it is safe to do so
- We are unable to treat ADHD in the presence of substance misuse; **this needs to be treated first**
- While cannabis use for 3 or fewer days a week (excluding night use to aid sleep) may be acceptable, each person's case is different and a clinical decision will be made as to whether prescribing is appropriate, or if further reduction in cannabis use is needed first
- If this is an issue for you, we can guide you to alternative support services and schedule an appointment after the issue has been resolved

### When medication will not be used (Contraindications)

Cannabis may help you feel relaxed, but it can interact significantly with certain ADHD medications.

Research shows that combining cannabis with stimulant medications, such as Ritalin and Concerta, can lead to heart and blood vessel (cardiovascular) complications. Some studies show that cannabis can also reduce the relaxing (therapeutic) effects of ADHD medications.

Cannabis use has also been associated with an increased risk of suicide, which already affects a disproportionately higher number of people with ADHD compared to those without.

Both ADHD and cannabis can also trigger psychosis, which includes seeing and hearing things (hallucinations and delusions).

**Always refer to the medication directions from your care specialist and pharmacist. Contact your prescriber if you have questions about your medication.**

**Contact Samaritans if you have worrying thoughts of suicide**

Call 116 123

Email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

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## Further support

Contact these local charities and communities for professional help to manage substance misuse.

### Bracknell

**New Hope**

**Call** 01344 312 360

**Email** [New.hope@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:New.hope@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

### High Wycombe

**One Recovery**

**Call** 0300 772 9672

**Email** [Ord@mpft.nhs.uk](mailto:Ord@mpft.nhs.uk)

### Maidenhead and Windsor

**Resilience**

**Call** 01628 796733

**Email** [admin@resilience-rbwm.org.uk](mailto:admin@resilience-rbwm.org.uk)

### Newbury

**WDP Adult Services**

**Call** 0300 030 4554

**Email** [West.Berkshire@wdp.org.uk](mailto:West.Berkshire@wdp.org.uk)

### Slough

**Turning Point (START)**

**Call** 01753 692 548

**Email** [start@turning-point.co.uk](mailto:start@turning-point.co.uk)

### Reading

**AA Alcoholics Anonymous**

**Call** 0118 956 7494

**Web** [alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

**Change Grow Live (CGL)**

**Call** 0118 955 7333

**Email** [Reading.admin@cgl.org.uk](mailto:Reading.admin@cgl.org.uk)

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## West Berkshire

Swanswell

Call 0300 003 7025

Email [Wberksadmin@swanswell.org](mailto:Wberksadmin@swanswell.org)

## Wokingham

Cranstoun

Call 0118 977 2022

Email [wokinghamreferrals@cranstoun.org.uk](mailto:wokinghamreferrals@cranstoun.org.uk)

## SMART

Call 0118 977 2022

Email [Wokingham@smartcjs.org.uk](mailto:Wokingham@smartcjs.org.uk)

## Other charities and communities

Al-Anon (support for family and friends)

Call 0300 003 7025

Web [al-anonuk.org.uk](http://al-anonuk.org.uk)

## Talk to Frank

Information about any drug and alcohol treatment options across the country

Web [talktofrank.com](http://talktofrank.com)

