



Cannabis and Hallucinogens

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Marijuana



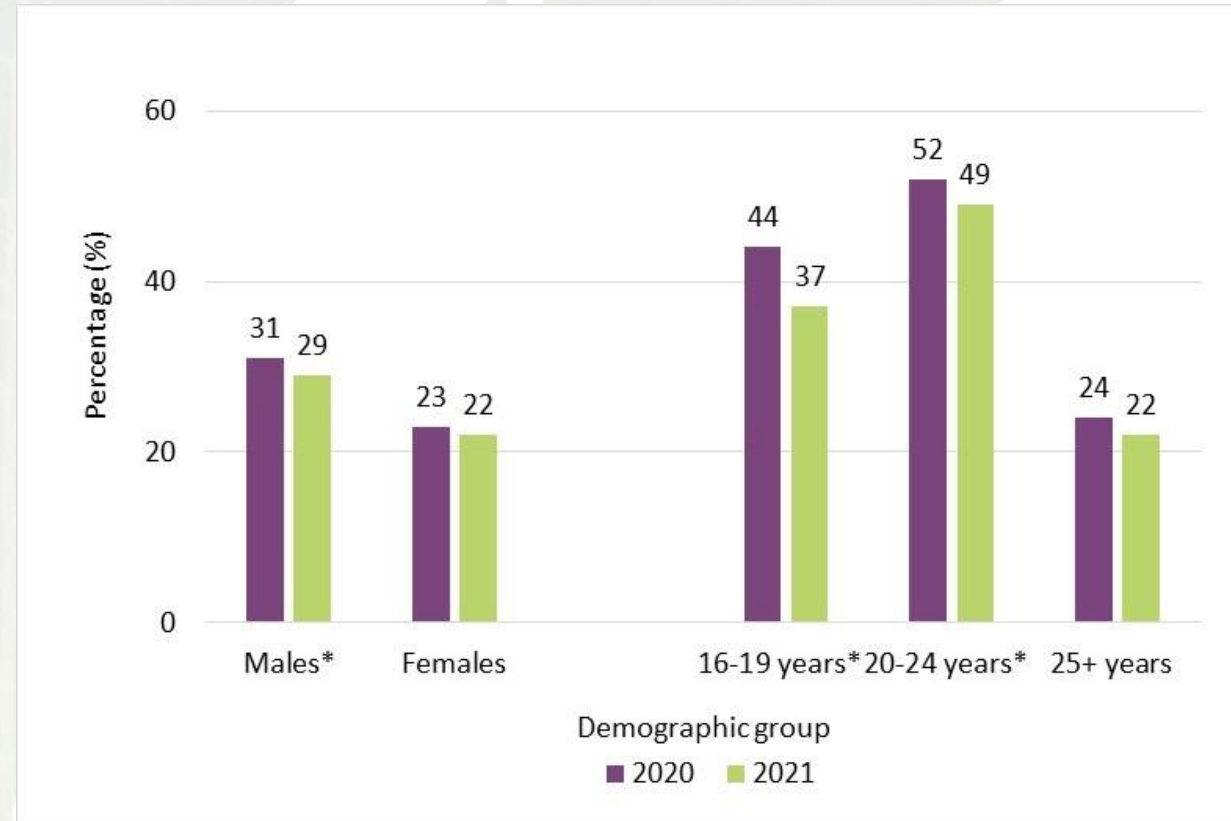
- History of Marijuana
- Effects of Marijuana
- Medical side effects
- Halachic Permissibility or Prohibition
- Alcohol versus Weed

History of Marijuana

- From cannabis plant
- (marijuana, weed, pot, bud, green, herb or flower), hash(ish), extracts (honey oil, phoenix tears, shatter), edibles
- First use in medically in China 2800 BCE
- Maybe Basis for the word Assassins (Hashashins)
- Used in making Hemp Products
- Recreational increased in 17th century
- First (unfounded) modern medical use in 18th century

Effects and Currents Statistics

- People can have very different experiences with cannabis. Some may feel relaxed, lively, talkative, giggly and even euphoric, while others feel tense, anxious, fearful and confused. The kind of experience you may have can vary from one drug-taking episode to another, usually because of the amount taken, the method used and the frequency of regular cannabis use. ([Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#))
- CTADS 2017 indicates that 15% of Canadians age 15 and older (or 4.4 million) have used cannabis in the past 12 months (19% among age 15 to 19 years; 33% among age 20 to 24 years; and 13% among age 25 years and older). CSTADS 2018/19 indicates that 18% of students in grades 7 to 12 (approximately 374,000) have used cannabis in the past 12 months. ([Canada.ca](#))



Where do effects come from?

- THC ([Tetrahydrocannabinol](#))
 - Primary psychoactive component – Causes “high”
- CBD ([Cannabidiol](#))
 - Psychoactive component proven to treat epilepsy approved prescription drug
- Both CBD and THC work with receptors that release neurotransmitters in your brain. They can affect things like [pain](#), mood, [sleep](#), and memory.

Arguments for/Against Marijuana Usage

- What are the medical effects long and short term? Is it addictive?
- What are the potential highs and lows? Are they desirable?



Potential Negative Effects

- Cannabis dependence (Marijuana Use Disorder (30%) of users)
 - Where weed interferes with other functions and needs
- Negatively impacts brain development (up to age 25-26)
- The following health risks are possible for anyone who uses cannabis heavily or regularly:
 - problems with thinking, memory or physical co-ordination
 - impairment, which can lead to serious injuries, including those from car accidents
- hallucinations, such as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that do not really exist
- mental health problems, specifically if you or an immediate family member has had a mental health issue, like psychosis or an addiction to alcohol or other drugs
- breathing or lung problems from smoking
- cancer from smoking
- problems during or after pregnancy, especially if cannabis is smoked

Preliminary Arguments against

- Negative Health effects – [See Tobacco](#)



Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe YD:3:35)

Regarding some young men from Yeshiva who began to smoke Hashish (Marijuana), it is obviously prohibited for several essential reasons from the Torah. **One, it ruins and destroys the body**, and even if there are healthy people are found who it does not effect so much **it ruins their minds** and they are unable to understand things properly which is even worse as it prevents him from learning Torah properly and from prayer and performance of Mitzvoth as doing them without proper awareness is as if you haven't done them.

Also, it causes a great desire even more so than **desires** for and the like that a person needs to live, and there are those who are unable to control their desires, and it is an immense prohibition as it is stated by **Ben Sorer U'Moreh (rebellious son)** and on the larger desire to eat far more, even though it is kosher, even more so that it is prohibited to bring oneself to so great a desire to something that isn't even a necessity for a person is prohibited,

And even though for Malkot, lashes, we may say you can punish based on a fortiori argument, in any event for prohibition you are definitely in violation,

And the problem of Ben Sorer uMoreh is that **he will eventually become a bandit and endanger people** (Sanhedrin 68b).

Further the mother and father of those who smoke, this brings great pain to them and is in violation on **honouring one's parents**.

There is also the concept of Kedoshim Tihiyu, you shall be holy, as expressed by the Ramban in his Torah commentary.

It also causes far more prohibitions besides this , at the end it is obvious and clear that it is amongst the severe prohibitions and you need to fight against it with all your might to remove this impurity from Bnei Yisrael, especially from those who learn in Yeshiva. (May 3, 1973)

Rebbe Nachman meBreslov (1772-1810)

- Now, all the desires of the body are the aspect of *kelipot* (evil forces). This is because the physical desires are extraneous, since the body could exist without them. They are extraneous to the body's existence, just as the *kelipot* are extraneous. For the main thing is only the fruit, whereas the *kelipot* (shells) are extraneous. Thus, physical desire overcoming a person is the evil forces overpowering holiness. (Likutei maharan 62:5:3)
- But when one eats like a glutton and a drunkard, this being synonymous with a blemishing of the altar, then the evil forces/foolishness draw excessive subsistence so that foolishness overpowers the intellect; whereas by eating properly they are subdued, as above. (Translations from Sefaria by Moshe Mykoff)

Lubavitcher Rebbe on LSD

Should I Take LSD to Attain Spiritual Heights?

20th of Marcheshvan, 5725 [Oct. 26, 1964]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessings:

I am in receipt of your letter of October 18th, which you write in the name of your friends and in your own behalf, and ask my opinion regarding the new drug called L.S.D., which is said to have the property of mental stimulation, etc.

Biochemistry is not my field, and I cannot express an opinion on the drug you mention, especially as it is still new. However what I can say is that the claim that the said drug can stimulate mystical insight, etc., is not the proper way to attain mystical inspiration, even if it had such a property. The Jewish way is to go from strength to strength, not by means of drugs and other artificial stimulants, which have a place only if they are

necessary for the physical health, in accordance with the Mitzva to take care of one's health. I hope that everyone will agree that before any drugs are taken one should first utilize all one's natural capacities, and when this is done truly and fully, I do not think there will be a need to look for artificial stimulants.

I trust that you and your group, in view of your Yeshiva background, have regular appointed times for the study of Torah, and the inner aspects of the Torah, namely the teachings of Chassidus, and that such study is in accordance with the principle of our Sages, namely "The essential thing is the deed," i.e., the actual conduct of the daily life in accordance with the Torah and Mitzvoth, prayer, Tefillin, Kashruth, etc., etc. This is only a matter of will and determination, for nothing stands in the way of the will. I trust that you are also using your good influence throughout your environment.

Chalban - Rabbi Chaim Ezra Hakohen Fatchia (1935-2019, Israel)

Using light drugs is a complete prohibition of the Torah. One who uses brings the spirit of impurity. This plant causes *Pgam Habrit* (sexual immorality) intentionally or inadvertently to anyone who uses it (whether man or woman), etc. Marijuana imbues the user to disgrace mitzvot and the sayings of the sages.

I heard when Rav Nachman of Breslov had tuberculosis, and knew that marijuana was a treatment, he did not want to use it because of the spirit of impurity in it and therefore was left with no medicine. ...

In my opinion it is like the sin of Peor because it causes a desire for hefkerut, wantonness. Be careful not to sleep in a room with one who uses or it will enter you a spirit like them. (Osrei lagefen vol 8 p394, translated in 'Marijuana and Halacha')

Rabbi Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz)

I once heard from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, in a private audience, an observation about drugs.

He was speaking about the effect on a person taking drugs. He was, incidentally, very careful about not saying anything negative about anybody. He said that the opinion of the Torah in general is that the person should be the master over his or her self, and enslavement of any sort is wrong.

Can a person still be the master over himself when involved with drugs and other addictive substances?

The problem with using any kinds of drugs or almost anything that has a little bit of psychoactive material is the same. Indeed, almost everything is psychoactive, including bread. If one fasts and then takes a piece of bread, it is possible to see how many changes are made in one's psyche.

The specific problem, however, with drugs is that people come relatively fast to a point of no return. In truth there is never a point of no return; but one quickly reaches a point from where it is very hard, almost impossible, to return...

Rabbi Yaakov Ariel (21st century Israel), www.toraland.org.il

- Question: What is the prohibition against taking soft drugs, which broaden sensation and imagination?
- Answer: Your question was addressed by Nachmanides... He calls this “degraded with the Torah’s license”, one who licenses himself, for example, to gorge himself on wine, meaning to be alcoholic. The sensation and imagination of which you speak are counter to the human destiny of truly actualizing one’s potential and fulfilling the command, “You shall be holy.” Even if we would ignore, as it were, the problem of addiction, and the harm which, G-d-forbid, a person who takes drugs could inflict upon himself or others, a person’s entry into a situation in which he loses intellectual control, entering the influence of drugs upon his sensation and imagination and elevating them over his intellect, would be a great corruption. (translation by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner)

Rabbi Daniel Korobkin (Mara D'atra at BAYT)

He [Rabbi Korobkin] also noted that smoking weed might violate the command, “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves” (Deuteronomy 4:15) – meaning that one must guard one’s body from physical harm.

Further, using a substance to the point that it impedes one’s ability to pray is halachically prohibited.

He referenced Purim, when the obligation to get drunk is tempered by warnings about not getting so intoxicated that one can’t properly pray or say grace after meals.

He also expressed concern that marijuana could be a “gateway drug,” potentially leading to a serious addiction.

But Rabbi Korobkin also noted that a number of talmudic passages refer to the benefits of using drugs

in moderation.

“There’s a recognition even from the biblical period that people suffer various pressures and depressions, and in order to be able to shake off some things that prevent you from fully expressing joy, it’s sometimes not only permitted, but mandated, to indulge in small quantities of mind-altering drugs,” he said.

Of course, he acknowledged, the Bible’s references to drugs usually pertain to wine, and it’s unclear whether marijuana would be similarly considered.

As for smoking to achieve spiritual connection, Rabbi Korobkin said, “I think it’s conceivable that using certain substances could get you in touch with God. A lot of times people have trouble seeing beyond a rigid, three-dimensional universe, and certain substances let people see beyond the veil of the physical world.” <https://thecjn.ca/uncategorized/complicated-halachahs-getting-high/>

Difference between Alcohol and Marijuana

- Mitzvah to use wine at times, no mitzvah for marijuana
- Time it takes to take effect
- Control of pace and amount of effects
- Alcohol can be potentially positive for average person, Marijuana may not
 - See Alcohol: Through Noah's Glass
- Gateway drug - Cannabis often coupled with far more troubling behaviors
- Cannot overdose on Cannabis, can on alcohol

Way you shouldn't use marijuana

- Negative medical effects
- Actions done under the influences
- After effects of using it
 - Cravings, desires, lack of interest
- Waste of time – See next week for more
- Bad crowd – Ben Sorer uMoreh
 - Gateway drug - Debatable
- Artificial spirituality isn't spirituality

Summary

- Why shouldn't you use weed/Hallucinogenics
 - Medical and health risks
 - Not a desirable state
- Is there merit to spirituality achieved through problematic means?
 - No
 - Chet HaEgel was a 'spiritual experience' as well
- But what about alcohol?
 - Option A - Both are bad
 - Option B – yes to wine when part of mitzvah, proper context, and overall positive outcome

Sources

- [“Marijuana in Halacha: Investigating Cannabis Plant through the lenses of Halacha, Kabbalah, Chassidut, & Hashkafa”](#) Anonymous
- [“Why Recreation Marijuana Isn’t Kosher”](#) Rabbi Tzvi Heber, COR
- [Drugs, Alcohol & Marijuana – Are They Ever Permitted In Judaism?](#) by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
- [Substance Abuse in Adolescents: Detection, Treatment and Prevention](#) Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski zt”l
- <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/26/facts-about-marijuana/>
- [Medical usages on marijuana](#)

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- Media addiction March 2
- Drinking on Purim March 9
- Panel - Sunday March 13
- Drug Abuse, the Pandemic and the Jewish Community