

Additional physical detox symptoms experienced by some of our members include sweating, tremors or shaking, dizziness, impotency, and chronic fatigue. Coughing up phlegm can last a few weeks to well over six months.

Please consult with a medical professional if symptoms are severe or persist.

Reducing Discomfort

Self-care is key to reducing discomfort. There are many tools for self-care, and they look different for everyone. Peer support is the cornerstone of the MA program because it decreases isolation and builds a support network. Share with others in meetings about your experiences and ask others how they got through detoxing.

Be gentle with yourself! Give yourself a break and allow time for your body and mind to heal; remember you are detoxing. Try not to beat yourself up if you aren't in a regular routine and chores and other tasks don't get done. Offer yourself patience, kindness, and self-love. Journaling is an effective way to express yourself. Writing and sharing gratitude lists helps you to remember the reasons why you are getting sober and keep your focus on the positive.

Members find it helpful to practice mindfulness. There are a variety of ways to be more present and in the moment. Bring awareness to the five senses: try to identify some things you can hear, smell, taste, feel, and see. You can ground yourself by connecting with your physical body and surroundings. Alternating hot and cold showers can also help bring awareness into your body.

The 11th Step of MA includes meditation, however it can be started at any time or stage in recovery. Everyone meditates differently, and what works for some may not work for others. Many members find that guided meditations are helpful. Try 11th Step MA group meditation meetings found in the MA Meeting Finder. There are many styles of meditation that can be accessed online and in apps.

We suggest you try a variety of methods until you find a meditation practice that works for you.

Given that THC is stored within the body's fat cells, it is helpful to maintain a healthy, balanced diet and to drink plenty of water and clear liquids. Building a routine of mild to moderate exercise, such as taking short walks outdoors, can help foster a positive mindset and assist the body in speeding up the healing process.

For intense discomfort, see a medical professional, ideally one who is experienced with detoxing.

A Doctor's Opinion About Marijuana Addiction

" . . . MA meetings and the fellowship of other Marijuana Anonymous members provide the experience of loving kindness on a regular basis. In addition, the foundation of the MA program is spiritual. The personal care and loving attention expressed by others, and the spiritual practice embodied in the recommended Twelve Steps of the program, directly and positively affect the reward center, the part of the brain that has been primarily altered by addiction. This spiritual program of action provides the necessary healing to allow an addict to attain a new life in recovery from marijuana addiction: a life with hope."

Note: This pamphlet has been written by Marijuana Anonymous members in recovery. We are not medical professionals, and this pamphlet should not be construed as medical advice. Detoxing is different for everyone. Please talk to a medical professional and advocate for yourself if you think you have symptoms relating to Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS), Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS), or Cannabis-Induced Psychosis (CIP). We suggest that you research these conditions and read the pamphlet "A Doctor's Opinion About Marijuana Addiction" and other MA literature.

About Marijuana Detox



MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

A Twelve Step Program of Recovery for Marijuana Addicts

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About Marijuana Detox

In spite of the common belief that there are no physiological or psychological effects of cannabis/marijuana addiction, a large number of recovering MA members experience withdrawal symptoms in some form as they stop using marijuana. For the purpose of this pamphlet, the words cannabis and marijuana are used interchangeably.

During withdrawal, the body works to reach a state of homeostasis while cleansing itself of lingering chemical influences. Detoxing can result in disruptions in brain chemistry and may be accompanied by mental and physical health repercussions for varying lengths of time. Alcohol and other drugs typically leave the body in a couple of days or weeks. THC (the active chemical in cannabis) is stored in the fat cells. Therefore, the body can retain THC for several months after quitting. This pamphlet has been written by MA members, not medical professionals, and any of the opinions expressed are personal experiences. Every body is different, and the length of detox time is unpredictable.

Marijuana Withdrawal Symptoms

Prior to quitting, there is no way of predicting who will be physically uncomfortable and who will not. Whether caused by physical or psychological addiction, cannabis/marijuana withdrawal symptoms present in many forms: emotional, mental, and physical.

Emotional Symptoms

“Regular, long-term use also results in activation of internal stress systems which try to keep brain function normal. These stress systems cause adverse feelings such as anxiety and dysphoria resulting in a fairly negative emotional state which is felt during withdrawal. This negative emotional state becomes much longer lasting and is relieved only by a return to use of marijuana or other drugs, unless the addict stops using altogether and for a substantial period of time, allowing the entire system to return to normal function. . . .

. . . Unfortunately, the part of the brain that identifies and helps people deal with problems is also affected by the addiction and the addict can’t see the problem for what it is, nor plan an effective way out of it.” – “A Doctor’s Opinion About Marijuana Addiction” (pamphlet)

An emotional rollercoaster is very common in early sobriety and may be intensified by some of the physical detox symptoms, such as loss of sleep. There are many emotional and psychological reasons that may have led someone into habitual and chronic marijuana use, and those reasons often still exist. Detoxing may be the very beginning of getting used to “life on life’s terms” and experiencing real feelings without a numbing agent, which can lead to heightened emotional levels. Erratic emotional responses are common and can last for some time as brain functions stabilize.

The most common symptom is fluctuations between depression and states of euphoria. Many MA members in early sobriety experience what is often called the “pink cloud,” feelings of extreme happiness, excitement, and glee; being overjoyed that they have found recovery. The pink cloud is met by states of sadness about the reality of the circumstances that brought us to recovery in the first place. It isn’t easy to take a hard look at ourselves, take an inventory of our wrongdoings, examine our character defects, and begin to address the life of an addict.

Anger is also very common: a slow-burning rage, constant irritability, sudden bursts of anger when least expected – anger with loved ones and oneself, anger at the world, and anger that we may have a problem with marijuana. The anger will eventually subside as your detox progresses and you participate in the MA program as suggested: going to meetings, finding a sponsor, and working the 12 Steps.

“When we stopped using marijuana, we didn’t automatically feel worthwhile and full of purpose. Our overwhelming feelings, character defects, and negative actions were still there. Sometimes they seemed even stronger than before, because we had no anesthetic to dull them. We were not problem users whose problems went away when we threw away our stash. When we stopped using,

we found we had a problem with living; we were addicts.” – Life with Hope, Step 2

Mental Symptoms

Chronic marijuana use tends to dampen the dreaming mechanism. In early sobriety, the ability to dream may return. They might be vivid, highly emotional dreams or nightmares. Dreams involving marijuana use (“using dreams”) are very common and considered a normal part of recovery.

Many people in early sobriety experience loss of concentration and memory. Some experience feelings of fear, anxiety, apathy, a loss in their sense of humor, and/or changes in sex drive. It takes time and patience to persevere through the variety of emotional detox symptoms, which is why MA utilizes peer support to work the 12 Steps of recovery.

Physical Symptoms

Physical symptoms and their duration will vary from person to person. If you experience severe or long-lasting symptoms, please contact a medical professional.

A common physical symptom is headaches. For those who experience them, the first few sober days can be intense, and headaches can last weeks to a couple of months, or longer. Another common physical symptom is difficulty sleeping. This can range from no sleep at all, to occasional sleeplessness, and can last days to months. Difficulty sleeping can be due to restlessness, the vivid dreaming mentioned above, and/or night sweats.

Many recovering addicts have eating problems for the first few days or weeks. The main symptoms are loss of appetite sometimes causing temporary weight loss, digestion problems, cramps after eating, nausea– and in extreme cases, vomiting. If these symptoms persist, contact a medical professional, as they may be indicators of Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS).