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HEALTH NEWS

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Why Researchers Say You Might Want to Smoke Marijuana Rather Than Vape It

Written by Brian Krans on December 9, 2018

A recent study determined that vaping cannabis can produce a significantly stronger high than smoking the drug.



Researchers suggest people trying marijuana for the first time build up a tolerance to the drug before vaping it. Getty Images

There are currently 10 states that allow for recreational cannabis use and more than twice as many that allow people to use the substance for medically approved reasons.

Because of these changes, more people have become open to the idea of trying cannabis for the first time. Many will try to decide which is the best ingestion method.

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easy high.

But smokers and vapers naive to cannabis should note all the different levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in different kinds of cannabis.

That's the psychoactive chemical — or the stuff that gets you high — found in the plant.

This data should be noted on the packaging of the product, from the concentrated oils meant for vaping or the plant meant for traditional smoking.

While it's best to seek help from a qualified professional, such as an experienced "budtender" at a dispensary, experts warn that not all smoking methods are the same.

Some can deliver a stronger dose than others.

When trying marijuana, experts suggest you take the same kind of caution that a chef uses when adding salt. Use a bit at a time — you can always put more in, but you can't take it out.

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Smoking vs. vaping

Vaping has become a popular way for people to consume cannabis.

In this manner, the cannabis is housed in a thin, pen-like device. It's less odorous and more discreet than smoking.

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But, according to new research, it's also similar to taking big swigs of a high-alcohol IPA rather than sipping on a Coors Light.

[Research out of Johns Hopkins University](#) in Maryland suggests that vaping marijuana versus smoking it delivers a more powerful punch.

Researchers at the school's Behavioral Pharmacology Research Unit tested 17 healthy adults who smoked and vaped various amounts of marijuana — from none to 25 milligrams of THC — for the first time in at least a month.

The lower doses created less impairment, but the 25-milligram dose affected everyone, including one research subject who experienced hallucinations.

But no matter the dose, researchers in this small double-blind placebo trial found that no matter the amount of THC, those who vaped marijuana reported more powerful effects, including serious impairment in their reaction time and overall cognitive abilities.

Johns Hopkins researchers said their findings “should be considered with regard to regulation of retail cannabis products and education for individuals initiating cannabis use.”

Advice for beginners

[Dr. Jordan Tishler](#), a Harvard-educated physician as well as president and chief executive officer of the [Association of Cannabis Specialists](#), said that the Johns Hopkins study confirms what he and other cannabis advocates have been saying for years.

On a puff-for-puff or gram-for-gram basis, vaporizing leads to more intoxication, but that's not how the study's findings should be interpreted.

“With more efficient systems, you simply need or should take less,” Tishler told Healthline. “This ultimately leads to fewer trips to the dispensary for the patient and less money spent on cannabis.”

And, for those who don't use too much or too often — or those trying it for

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Cannabis, like any other substance that alters your state of consciousness, is not entirely safe or right for everyone.

But part of it starts with helping the body build a tolerance to it.

Jessie Gill, the registered nurse behind [MarijuanaMommy.com](https://www.marijuanamommy.com), says in the beginning cannabis can affect the heart a lot like exercise — a patient's heart rate and blood pressure may increase.

For many new to marijuana, this could be alarming and trigger anxiety and nausea, a reported complaint from the high-dose smokers and vapers in the Johns Hopkins study.

One thing Gill noticed about the Johns Hopkins study is that too many subjects started at too high of a dose, in particular those who received 25 milligrams of THC right off the bat.

“One of the biggest causes of cannabis-induced anxiety is overconsumption,” said Gill, who encourages new patients to start with around 2.5 to 5 milligrams of inhaled cannabis, or about one hit of vaporized flower. “Their tolerance will increase gradually.”

[Lisa Harun](#), the co-founder and chief marketing officer of the cannabis-vaping company [Vapium](#), said that those new to cannabis should clear their schedules and choose a comfortable environment that encourages relaxation with some friends they trust.

Essentially, she suggests that people ease into cannabis, but first-time users should be prepared to not get high at all or the exact opposite — too high. Vapium recommends conscious consumption and learning one's limits.

“Don't jump into bong rips, slab dabs, or things of that nature until you take a few baby steps,” Harun told Healthline. “You don't run a marathon without prep and the same principle applies to smoke. Your mission was to get high for the first time, not melt your entire face off.”

[Keith Humphreys](#), PhD, a psychiatrist at Stanford Health Care and a former senior policy advisor for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy under President Barack Obama, warns younger users that

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Humphreys told Healthline. “But the likelihood that you’ll perform less well in school and on the job should not be ignored.”

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Take it slow

While a fatal overdose on cannabis has yet to occur, the major risk to any casual cannabis user is overintoxication, which is directly tied to dose, Tishler said.

“The mantra ‘start low and go slow’ is right on,” he said. “Beginners should avoid taking more than a puff or two, and then see how they feel.”

Inhaled cannabis can take 10 to 15 minutes to take effect.

“You can take a whole lot of puffs in that time,” Tishler said. “Restraint is a good policy.”

But for users under the age of 25, restraint is the best policy.

Many health officials have changed the antiquated “Just Say No” campaign to “Delay, Delay, Delay.” Essentially, cannabis consumption is still not a good idea for young people.

Amanda Winn Lee of [“A Mom’s Guide to Cannabis”](#) says people under the age of 25 should exercise extreme caution when using cannabis because a young adult’s brain is still growing and neural development is still occurring.

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“Too much cannabis can prevent those new neural pathways from developing, so the brain in essence stagnates,” she told Healthline.



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