



**JOB AID**

# **Drugs and Alcohol: The Facts About Cannabinoids, Psychedelics and Empathogens**

# Drugs and Alcohol: The Facts About Cannabinoids, Psychedelics and Empathogens

The physical, mental and emotional impairment that results from drug use and misuse can affect productivity, morale and most importantly, the safety of users and their co-workers.

## **Cannabinoids**

Cannabinoids are a group of substances found in the cannabis plant. The main cannabinoids are:

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – primarily responsible for altering a person's mental state
- Cannabidiol (CBD) – used in medical marijuana but does not produce a "high" by itself

## **Marijuana**

Marijuana is:

- The dried, shredded parts of the cannabis plant
- Green, brown or gray
- Smoked as a cigarette, known as a joint, or in a pipe, bong or blunt
- Ingested when mixed in foods or brewed as tea
- Also called grass, pot and weed

Other forms of marijuana include:

- Hashish, which contains eight times more THC than marijuana
- Hemp, which contains much lower levels of THC and can be used to make fibers, paper, lotion, yarn, soap and shampoo.

Ingesting hemp products can generate a positive drug test result. THC can

cause:

- Impaired attention, coordination and judgment
- Appetite shifts
- Ingestion of coal tars into the lungs when smoked
- Energy loss
- Short-term memory loss
- Paranoia, hypersensitivity
- At high doses, image distortion, loss of personal identity and hallucinations

Depending on the bodily substance examined, THC is eliminated from the body at different rates:

- Breath: 2 to 3 hours
- Saliva: up to 24 hours
- Blood: up to 3 weeks
- Urine: up to 1 month
- Hair: 90 days

**NOTE:** Marijuana laws vary by region and workers need to follow their local laws and company policies.

## Psychedelics

Psychedelic drugs are a class of psychoactive substances that produce changes in perception, mood and cognitive function.

### Phencyclidine (PCP)

- Is a hallucinogen and dissociative drug
- Usually comes as a white powder, which can be dissolved in alcohol or water
- May be dyed various colors and sold as a tablet, capsule, liquid or powder
- Can be inhaled, injected, swallowed or smoked
- Is commonly called angel dust, embalming fluid, hog, killer weed, love boat, ozone, peace pill, rocket fuel, super grass and wack
- Makes you feel disconnected from reality and suspicious of others
- Makes you feel like you have superhuman strength – if you get seriously injured, you might not feel the pain
- Causes numbness throughout the body and loss of coordination
- Causes an increased heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate and body temperature

Using PCP for a long time can cause:

- Memory loss, thinking problems and problems talking clearly
- Mood problems, such as depression or anxiety which can lead to suicide attempts

These problems can persist for up to a year after an individual has stopped using PCP.

## Empathogens

This class of drugs increases a person's feeling of empathy and benevolence towards others as well as feelings of being socially accepted and connected.

### Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)

- Is a man-made empathogen that causes hallucinations and stimulant effects
- Causes an excess release of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that plays an important role in the regulation of mood, sleep, pain, appetite and other behaviors
- Heightens a person's senses and makes users feel less inhibited
- Enables users to dance for hours at parties and clubs due to its stimulant effects
- Is usually sold in tablet form, taken orally and is imprinted with a logo
- Is also referred to as Ecstasy, Molly, XTC, E, X, Beans or Adams
- Causes confusion, depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, cravings, paranoia, muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, nausea, blurred vision, tremors, rapid eye movement, and sweating or chills

MDMA tablets are notoriously impure, often containing chemicals other than MDMA. Users are also at risk of consuming other drugs that are sold to them as MDMA.

Abusers of MDMA risk dehydration, hyperthermia (exceptionally high fever) and heart or kidney failure. Combining MDMA with other drug substances increases these risks.