

## UNDERSTANDING WHY YOU USE CANNABIS

People use cannabis for different reasons, such as relaxation, stress relief, pain management, or fitting in socially. Knowing your reasons can help address underlying issues and support making healthier choices. For example, if you use cannabis to manage anxiety, finding alternative coping strategies can be a crucial step in living a healthier lifestyle.

## YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS

If you're considering making changes to your cannabis use, you have two main options: reducing your use or quitting entirely. Both approaches can lead to significant improvements in your overall well-being.

**Cutting Down:** Reducing cannabis use can positively impact your health and daily life. You might experience some short-term challenges, but over time, you can expect increased mental clarity, improved relationships, and financial savings. Please note that due to genetic differences in the way our mind forms chemical dependences, this isn't a viable option for everyone.

**Quitting:** For a lot of people, quitting cannabis altogether is the best option, especially if there's a family history of mental health or heavy substance use. Although it might seem daunting, many people successfully stop using cannabis with the right support and resources.

Regardless of your choice, Student Health Services are here to support you throughout your journey. We can help you create a plan and explore different strategies to find what best suits you.



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# IS SMOKING WEED CAUSING PROBLEMS IN YOUR LIFE?

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS.



MENTAL HEALTH  
& WELLBEING

# CANNABIS USE IN NEW ZEALAND

- New Zealand's most common illegal drug is cannabis.
- Over half a million adults in NZ use cannabis each year.
- Almost a quarter of 15–24-year-olds use cannabis each year.

Cannabis use might seem harmless, but taking look at what's going on in our lives often reveals that it is causing problems. And of course, just because something is common, doesn't always mean it's good for us.

## CANNABIS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The effects of cannabis on mental health are different for each person. Here are some common effects to consider. Think about whether any of these relate to your own experiences.

- **Lack of Motivation:** Struggling to start or finish tasks and feeling unmotivated about goals.
- **Cognitive Impairment:** Memory problems and trouble concentrating.
- **Paranoia:** Feeling suspicious and thinking other people have bad intentions when they don't.
- **Anxiety:** Excessive worry or panic attacks.
- **Depression:** Long lasting sadness and loss of interest in activities.
- **Suicide Risk:** Increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours.
- **Increased Risk of Psychosis / Schizophrenia:** Confused thinking and believing things that aren't true.

It's also important to note that mental health challenges, such as the ones above, can lead people to be more likely to want to use cannabis. Understanding this two-way relationship can be an important part of the recovery journey.



## SOME COMMON CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME WHEN QUITTING



### Boredom

For a lot of people, smoking weed is their main hobby. It's essential to fill this void. Consider what new activities you could take up and plan your weekends. Activities involving creativity work well for overcoming cannabis withdrawals. Anything from adult colouring books, to making music!



### Loneliness

For some people, smoking weed was their main way of socialising. Building a new life without cannabis often involves joining new clubs and meeting new people.

Ēhara tāku toa i te toa takatahi, engari he toa takitini. | Our strength is not made from us alone, but made from many.



### Social Pressure

Inform the people around you of your decision to quit and seek their support. If they're not supportive, consider meeting some new people who are on a more similar journey to you. Narcotics Anonymous are a great option – details on last page.



### Sleep

A lot of people struggle to sleep in their first week without cannabis. Good sleep hygiene such as breathing techniques, and avoiding technology can help, but the best thing to know is that it is temporary. Your sleep is highly likely to improve naturally over time. If symptoms do persist, contact Student Health.



### Nausea

Sometimes people feel nauseous in the first few days after quitting. This usually doesn't last more than a couple of weeks, but hot showers are often a helpful remedy.



### Cravings and withdrawals

Stay hydrated, eat healthily, distract yourself with activities like exercise or hobbies.

## TIPS FOR CUTTING DOWN OR QUITTING

- **Seek Professional Support:** Contact Student Health Services on 07 838 4037 for free, confidential, personalised guidance and resources.
- **Find New Ways to Manage Emotions:** Explore strategies like yoga, meditation, or engaging in activities such as art, writing, or music to help manage stress and emotions.
- **Manage Triggers:** Create a plan to avoid people, places, or situations that trigger your urge to use cannabis. This might involve changing routines or finding new social activities.
- **Celebrate Progress:** Recognise and celebrate each milestone in your journey. Reward yourself with healthy self-care for your efforts.
- **Learn to Appreciate Your Sober Self:** Practice self-compassion and focus on finding new enjoyment in life.

### Student Health Service | Hauora Ākonga | 07 838 4037

Free and confidential mental health & wellbeing support. Counselling specifically for substance issues is also available. Hours: Mon, Tues, Thur, Fri 9am – 4:30pm. Wed 9:30am – 4:30pm

### Alcohol and Drug Helpline | 0800 787 797

Free 24/7 support for anyone in New Zealand with a question or concern about their own or someone else's drinking or other drug use. Call the Māori Line on **0800 787 798** for advice and referral to kaupapa Māori services. Call the Pasifika Line on **0800 787 799** for advice and referral to services developed for Pacific people.

### Healthline | 0800 611 116

Free 24/7 health advice, information and treatment from healthcare professionals.

### Lifeline Aotearoa | 0800 543 354

Free 24/7 mental health guidance.

### Need to Talk? | 1737

Free 24/7 service for anyone feeling down, anxious, a bit overwhelmed or just need to chat to someone. You can call or text **1737**.

## TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Taking the first step can be the hardest part. Fear of judgment or consequences can sometimes prevent people from seeking the help they need.

Please know that Student Health prioritises your well-being and confidentiality. We are here to

provide support with care and understanding. If you have any questions or are ready to get some support, please call one of the numbers listed above.

He waka eke noa | A canoe which we are all in with no exception. We are all in this together.