

DRUG CHECKING

Free analysis of psychoactive substances purchased on the black market, advice is also provided. Present in a number of cantons.

PILOT TRIALS

Points of sale where you can legally purchase cannabis with THC. The production process is closely monitored and different THC levels are available. Registration is required and a number of criteria must be met. Present in a number of cantons.

CANNABIS

How to reduce the risks?

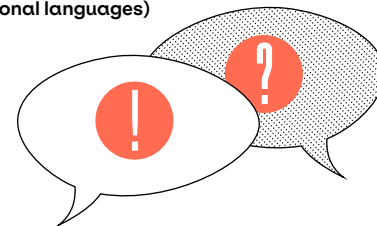
WHEN IN NEED

→ SafeZone.ch
→ Indexaddictions.ch
→ Stop-Cannabis.ch
→ CANreduce.ch

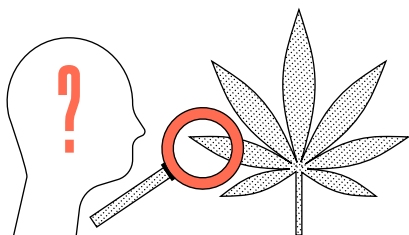
(available only in national languages)

COMBI-CHECKER.CH

This website provides information about the effects of combining several substances (available in English).



1 BEWARE OF PRODUCTS ON THE BLACK MARKET

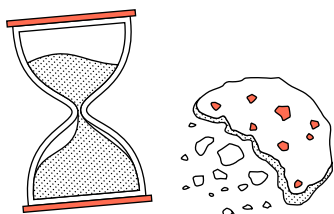


Products purchased on the black market/illegal market (e.g. on the street, on social networks, the dark net, etc.) are not controlled in any way. It is therefore difficult to know what you are buying: origin, THC content, presence of other substances such as pesticides, fertilizers, mould, or synthetic cannabinoids. Toxic effects are possible, the short and long-term effects of which are still little-known and understood. If you suffer a sudden or unexpected reaction following consumption, it is important to call for help (ambulance 144, poisoning 145) or consult your doctor.

To reduce the risks associated with buying on the black market/illegal market, it is important to keep in mind that there are always risks involved. In addition:

- Mix the purchased product well to avoid concentrations of unwanted toxic substances.
- The “Substance Alerts” section of the website infodrog.ch regularly publishes the results of analyses of samples obtained from the black market (risk, date and location) to alert those who consume them.
- Depending on where you live, and under certain conditions, you can have your substance checked by a Drug Checking service (listed on the infodrog.ch website)
- Depending on where you live, and under certain conditions, you can register for a cannabis pilot trial to obtain it legally. The production process is strictly controlled and you have a choice of different THC levels.

2 USE A SMALL DOSE IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE PRODUCT OR HOW TO CONSUME IT



The most intense effects of cannabis take some time to come on. When smoking or inhaling, you must wait a few minutes to feel the first effects. Peak intensity generally occurs within the first half hour. For ingested (edible) products, you must be patient and wait several hours to feel the full effects. It is important to remember that, in all cases, the effects continue after the peak (the comedown phase).

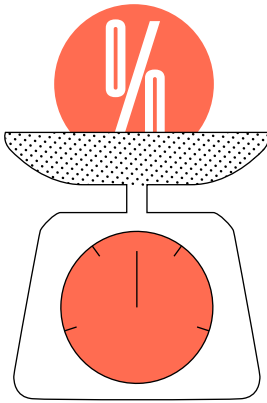
To reduce the risk of intoxication from an overdose (e.g. loss of consciousness, vomiting, anxiety attack), consume small doses and wait for the effects to peak before considering another dose. In addition:

- Keep calm if you feel uncomfortable, sit down, get some fresh air and wait for the effects to gradually wear off.
- If necessary, call for help (ambulance 144, intoxication 145).
- A small dose also helps reduce the risk of intoxication from the presence of undesirable toxic substances (e.g. synthetic cannabinoids).



3

SEE IF A LOWER DOSE OF THC SUITS YOU BETTER



THC also has psychoactive properties. It acts on the brain, causing various effects: slight euphoria or disinhibition, alteration of perceptions, reduction of anxiety, etc. The effects of consumption are influenced by a range of factors, including the THC level and dose. Although it is impossible to fully control these when buying products on the black market, you can try to obtain the desired effects while reducing the level of exposure to THC.

Several avenues can be considered to reduce the level of exposure to THC while obtaining the desired effects:

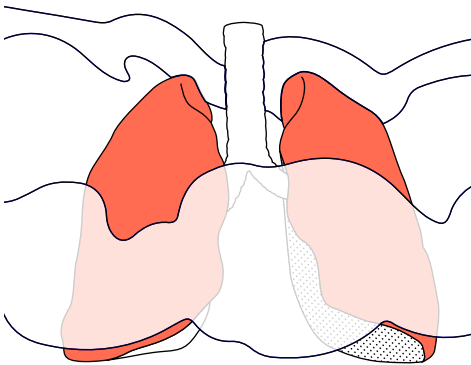
→ **Dose:** assess whether you can still obtain the desired effects with a lower dose.

→ **Level:** depending on where you live, and under certain conditions, you can register for a cannabis pilot trial to obtain it legally. The production process is strictly controlled and you have a choice of different THC levels. Without necessarily reducing the dose, you can choose to consume cannabis with a lower THC level.

Caution: consider that tolerance and other individual factors such as the context, state of mind and interactions with other substances (to be avoided!) can all influence how the effects are experienced.

4

TRY CONSUMPTION METHODS THAT DO NOT INVOLVE BURNING IT



In Switzerland, cannabis is often consumed by smoking it mixed with tobacco. However, inhaled smoke contains toxic elements which expose the person to a number of risks (e.g. chronic bronchitis, increased risk of lung cancer). Addiction to the nicotine present in tobacco can also occur quickly and easily.

To reduce the risks associated with combustion, as well as nicotine addiction, it is possible to try alternatives such as:

→ **Vaporizers:** far fewer toxic products are inhaled (the product is heated to a lower temperature of approx. 200°C). The aroma of cannabis is far more noticeable. Various sizes are available (portable and table-top).

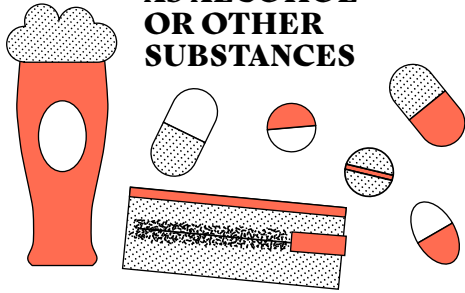
→ **Vaping/e-cigarettes with THC:** Far fewer toxic products are inhaled, provided that the production quality is controlled. Never buy equipment or e-liquids that are not properly controlled (black market: from the street, social networks, the dark net, etc.). For example, the United States was particularly affected by this problem in 2019 with an epidemic of lung lesions. If you experience respiratory issues, digestive problems, nausea, weight loss or other symptoms, even several days or weeks after consuming the product, stop consuming and immediately consult your doctor for further examinations.

→ **Ingested (edible) products:** No toxic products generated by burning or heating. This consumption method does not require inhalation. Remember, the most intense effects only come on after several hours, and there is a risk of overdosing if you are not patient (e.g. taking another dose without having fully felt the effects of the first one).



5

AVOID CONSUMING CANNABIS AT THE SAME TIME AS ALCOHOL OR OTHER SUBSTANCES



Alcohol, certain medications and other psychoactive substances (e.g. MDMA, ecstasy) also cause effects. If these substances are consumed at the same time as cannabis, they interact with it and can pose additional risks for the person consuming them (e.g. stronger effects, psychotic experiences, vomiting, heart failure, etc.). The effects do not only accumulate, but they can also multiply dangerously.

To reduce exposure to these types of risks it is important to avoid using cannabis in conjunction with other substances. Further information:

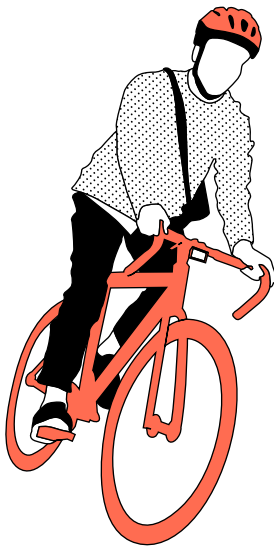
→ The [combi-checker.ch](https://www.combi-checker.ch) website details the risks incurred when mixing substances.

→ Contact your doctor if you take medications.

→ If necessary, call for help (ambulance 144, intoxication 145).

6

DO NOT DRIVE AND AVOID ACTIVITIES WHICH REQUIRE YOUR FULL FACULTIES



Driving a vehicle (car, scooter, bike) or operating machinery under the influence of cannabis practically doubles the risk of serious accidents leading to injury or death (drivers, passengers, other road users, pedestrians). Impairment of motor and cognitive abilities varies depending on the method of consumption, the dose consumed, the THC level and a wide range of individual factors. It is therefore impossible to fully anticipate how cannabis consumption will affect a person's faculties (e.g. reflexes). A number of seemingly innocuous activities are therefore also affected: swimming, skiing, hiking, using stairs, DIY, etc.

To reduce the risk of accidents, it is important to avoid consuming if you are going to perform activities which require full cognitive and motor skills. The effects can last for a long time and cannot be predicted accurately:

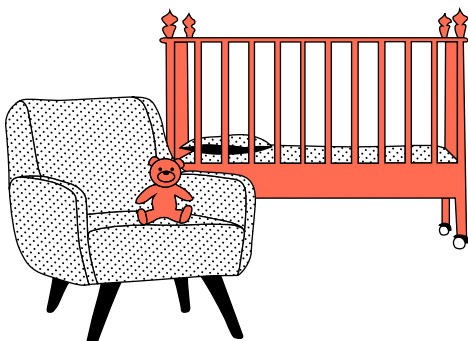
→ **Inhalation:** may impair essential driving faculties for several hours. The periods most often mentioned in the research are 2 to 4 hours, but even up to 4 or 6 hours. There is always a risk that this will last longer.

→ **Ingestion:** may cause impairment of faculties between 8 and 12 hours. There is always a risk that this will last longer.

Caution: Switzerland has a zero-tolerance policy on the use of cannabis while driving. That is to say, no traces of THC should be found in the body when tested, even if you are capable of driving. THC can be detected by advanced tests (e.g. urine) several days after it has been consumed. Regular consumption of THC therefore makes driving a vehicle legally impossible. CBD can also generate positive results in the same tests.

7

PROTECTING CHILDREN



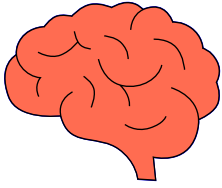
It is important to abstain from consuming cannabis during pregnancy and breastfeeding; you should also take various precautions following a pregnancy.

Some studies suggest that consuming cannabis when pregnant exposes the foetus to a number of risks (e.g. lower weight at birth, higher mortality during the first year). Whether caused by the presence of THC or combustion associated with the method of consumption, the risks have been fairly well established. Although the effects of THC are still being studied, you should refrain from consuming it. Following the birth, exposing an infant to smoke can cause respiratory pathologies. It is also important to protect your children from passive smoke by refraining from smoking around them or inside home. Whatever the method of consumption, it is important to keep cannabis out of reach of children to prevent the risk of intoxication (e.g. accidental ingestion).



8

AVOID USE AND CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.



Some people have personal or family histories which include psychosis, schizophrenia, mood disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, etc. These are difficult to reconcile with the consumption of cannabis. Consumption is associated with the risk of triggering crisis episodes.

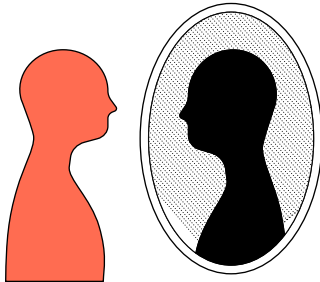
To reduce the risks associated with family history, it is important to abstain and to contact your doctor to discuss the consumption of cannabis. Further information:

→ indexaddictions.ch helps you to find organisations in your area based on the criteria you enter.

→ Addiction to one or more substances must also be included in the list of antecedents.

9

ASK YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR CONSUMPTION ON A REGULAR BASIS



It is important to take the time to ask yourself the following questions: At what times do I consume it? Am I using it while in a negative mindset? Am I giving up certain activities because of my consumption? What role does cannabis play in my day-to-day life?

Contact your health professional to discuss the issue, they can provide support to help you avoid the appearance or worsening of problems. They are also available to discuss and answer various questions. Further information:

→ The “Test yourself” section of the website safezone.ch includes a cannabis self-assessment test.

→ indexaddictions.ch helps you to find organisations in your area based on the criteria you enter (not available in English).

Though cannabis is the most consumed illicit substance in Switzerland, only a small minority of the population uses it (less than one person in ten). If you are member of this group, there are several things you can do to reduce the associated health risks.

