



CLAIM	RESPONSE
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**Cannabis use impairs cognitive function.**

- While there is moderate evidence that early-onset and sustained cannabis use is associated with impairments in cognitive function, there are gaps in the scientific evidence on the full range of effects and their reversibility. Hence, this general claim requires clarification, as well as further research. Moreover, even where research suggests that cannabis use can have certain impacts on the brain, this will not be the case for every cannabis user in every situation.
- Unsurprisingly, evidence has shown that during intoxication, cannabis use has acute effects on cognitive functions, such as learning and memory (Crane, Schuster, Fusar-Poli, & Gonzalez, 2013). Some scientific studies have found associations between heavier, long-term cannabis use and impairments in cognitive areas such as memory, attention, and verbal learning, particularly when use is initiated during adolescence (W. Hall, 2014; Volkow, Baler, Compton, & Weiss, 2014). However, these studies have reported different outcomes with respect to the permanence of these impairments. Given the current state of the scientific research, the simple assertion that cannabis leads to reduced cognitive function is misleading.
- Claims about the impact of cannabis use on cognitive functioning are at times accompanied by assertions that use leads to school failure, later unemployment, problems with life satisfaction, and other poor outcomes or psychosocial harms. However, scientists have not been able to remove all other possible explanations, and as such the evidence is weak in clearly establishing associations between cannabis use and these outcomes (Fergusson & Boden, 2008; Townsend, Flisher, & King, 2007). It's also noteworthy that a systematic review of all longitudinal scientific studies on this topic found that the evidence did not support a causal relationship between cannabis use by young people and various psychosocial harms (Macleod et al., 2004).

**BOTTOM LINE:** While the evidence suggests that cannabis use (particularly among youth) likely impacts cognitive function, the evidence to date remains inconsistent regarding the severity, persistence, and reversibility of these cognitive effects.

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