

CANNABIS (MARIJUANA) IN THE WORKPLACE

Disclaimer: While some states have legalized the use of cannabis for either medical or recreational use, cannabis is still illegal under federal law.

INTRODUCTION

Whether cannabis (commonly referred to as marijuana) is used for medical or recreational purposes, employees who arrive at work while under the effects of cannabis could put themselves and others at risk of injury.

Cannabis, similar to other drugs (prescription or illicit), has known and unknown effects on the user's body.

Similar to arriving at work while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, employees who arrive at work while under the influence of cannabis could be subject to consequences such as suspension or termination.



SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

When a person has used cannabis by either smoking, vaping, or ingesting (edibles) for a short period of time, they could potentially experience some of the following short-term effects:

- Increased heart rate
- Low blood pressure or orthostatic (positional) hypotension (a decrease of blood pressure within 3 minutes of standing)
- Relaxed muscles
- Slowed digestion
- Dizziness
- Distorted perception (sights, sounds, time, touch)
- Difficulty in thinking, memory, and problem-solving skills
- Loss of coordination and motor skills
- Increased appetite
- Dry mouth
- Dry eyes
- Coughing



Note: Scientists have noted that there is an increased chance of people have feelings of agitation, anxiety, confusion, panic, or paranoia in people who have psychiatric disorders or in people who are using for the first time.

Note: THC, a component of cannabis, that contributes to many of the effects of the plant can show up in urine a month after the effects of cannabis have worn off.



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LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Note: Due to cannabis being illegal under federal law and classified as a Schedule 1 drug, there is limited research on the long-term effects of cannabis. The long-term effects that are listed below are the currently known effects that have been studied by scientists.



If a person has been using cannabis for an extended period of time (months or years), they could potentially experience some of the following long-term effects:

- Worsening of psychiatric disorders such as depression
- Reduction in short- and long-term memory
- Worsening of respiratory conditions
- The development of chronic cough or certain respiratory conditions (if smoking or vaping)

ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICIES

While arriving at work while under the effects of cannabis could result in consequences such as suspension or termination, employees should become familiar with their employer’s zero-tolerance policy.

If an employer does not have a zero-tolerance policy, employees should become familiar with any drug and alcohol policies that the company has.



CONCLUSION

With certain states legalizing the medical or recreational use of cannabis, employees should remember that it has effects similar to alcohol or other drugs. Employees who arrive at work while under the effects of cannabis could potentially expose themselves or coworkers to injuries. Employees should become familiar with either their company’s zero-tolerance or alcohol and drug policies.