



## Where to seek help

In an emergency, call 000.

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Other than in an emergency situation, contact your local ADF Medical Centre or Psychology Section. Navy personnel can seek help through their divisional system, local Alcohol and Drug Program Advisor (ADPA) or can directly contact their local Alcohol and Drug Program Coordinators.

## Mental Health Resources

**Local Medical Centres** Your local medical officer can provide immediate assistance and referrals as required.

**Psychology Support Section** All Psychology Support Sections offer after-hours, critical incident support through the local Duty Officer/Officer of the Day.

### Defence Community Organisation

<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dco/> or [www.defence.gov.au/dco/](http://www.defence.gov.au/dco/)

The DCO provides services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round including public holidays. During normal business hours the first point of call is the Duty Social Worker or Military Support Officer. Outside these core hours and on Public Holidays, calls should be directed to the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) on 1800 801 026 or if calling from overseas +61 2 93594842.

**Chaplains** There are Chaplains connected to all units in Australia who can provide support and appropriate referrals.

### The Family Information Network for Defence (FIND) (1800 020 031)

FIND is a phone service that provides easy access to personnel information on matters of everyday interest and concern. It is a confidential service that is available to every Service person and family anywhere in Australia.

**Lifeline (131 114)** If you, or a friend, need to talk to someone about a problem immediately, you can call Lifeline for the cost of a local call.

**Veterans and Veteran's Families Counselling Service (VVCSS)** This service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families. VETLINE – 24 hour emergency line (1800 011 046).

**ADF Mental Health Strategy All-hours Support Line (ASL)** The ASL is a confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. (1800 628 036) (FREECALL within Australia) and (61 2 9425 3878) (outside Australia)

### Australian Defence Force Mental Health Strategy (ADFMHS)

Defweb Address <http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dsg/sites/dmh/>  
Internet Address [www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm](http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm)  
Email [DMH.mentalhealth@defence.gov.au](mailto:DMH.mentalhealth@defence.gov.au)



Australian Government  
Department of Defence

ADF Mental Health Strategy

# CANNABIS

be  
well

work  
well

live  
well

## What is cannabis?

Cannabis is the generic term for the various psychoactive preparations of the *Cannabis sativa* or *Cannabis indica* plants. 'Psychoactive' means that it has a relatively significant effect on the central nervous system. The term 'cannabis' covers marijuana leaf, flowers, seeds, oil and resin from the cannabis plant.

The principal psychoactive component in cannabis is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is concentrated in the flowering heads of the plants, and lower levels of THC are found in the leaves.

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug in Australia, across all socio-economic groups. The 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey reports that around one-third of Australians have used cannabis at least once in their lives. It is widely available throughout the country, in urban and rural areas.

### **Cannabis possession and use is illegal**

## Where to get more information

Accurate and up-to-date information on cannabis can be obtained from the following websites:

Australian Drug Information Network  
([www.adin.com.au](http://www.adin.com.au))

Australian Drug Foundation  
([www.adf.org.au/](http://www.adf.org.au/))

National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre  
([www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au](http://www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au))

## What will happen to me if I am found to be using cannabis?

The ADF has a **ZERO Tolerance** policy on the use of illicit drugs by its members. As a deterrent measure the ADF conducts ongoing random drug testing of ADF members (a minimum of 10% of members per annum). Cannabis remains in the body long after it is used. This means a person will return a positive test result days or even weeks after they have taken the drug.

ADF members hold themselves to a set of values – these values are not consistent with breaking the law and supporting criminal activities. Obtaining cannabis supports criminality and the consumption of cannabis is illegal. Cannabis use not only threatens your career and financial well-being but also affects your families' security. It also impacts on your mates who are often assumed to be guilty by association when you are caught using illicit drugs.

Under Defence Instruction (General) Personnel 15–2, use of illicit drugs by members of the ADF will usually lead to disciplinary and/or administrative action to terminate the member's appointment or initiate discharge proceedings.

## What will happen to me if I self refer for using cannabis?

Self-referral is a once only opportunity. It enables those members who feel they may be dependent on a prohibited substance, or who have had previous prohibited substance involvement, to access timely and appropriate treatment.

Under Defence Instruction (General) Administrative 45–2 health care professionals are obligated to report illicit drug use that is not already known to the chain of command.

A request for self-referral does not prevent a Service authority from administratively terminating an appointment or discharging a member. However, Service authorities may look upon self-referral favourably when considering discharge or retention action. This will also depend on whether the member:

- is assessed as substance dependent
- fails to demonstrate abstinence from involvement with prohibited substances
- fails to demonstrate potential for future effective service
- is assessed by a psychologist or psychiatrist as being likely to relapse or to have developed a long term psychiatric illness.

## What does it do?

The short-term effects of using cannabis can include:

Relaxation, loss of inhibitions, feeling of well-being, increased tendency to talk and laugh, increased appetite, uncoordinated movement, unclear judgement, dry mouth, inability to concentrate, lethargy, and nausea. Some more serious side-effects may include panic attacks and anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, confusion, and chest pain.

The long-term effects are that:

Cannabis smoking can cause bronchitis and asthma, and may lead to the development of mouth, throat and lung cancers. Males who smoke cannabis regularly produce less testosterone and have lower sperm counts. There is also some evidence that heavy cannabis use may lead to mental health problems in people who are vulnerable to mental illness.

## But isn't possession of cannabis legal in some parts of Australia?

No. In some jurisdictions possession of small amounts of cannabis has been decriminalised, but this is different to legalisation. Possession of cannabis is illegal everywhere in Australia.

## Can you become 'addicted' to cannabis?

Using large amounts of cannabis regularly, over a lengthy period of time can result in a person becoming dependent on cannabis. Being dependent on a drug means that you need repeated doses of the drug to feel good or to avoid feeling bad.

There is clear evidence of a cannabis withdrawal syndrome, with symptoms including anxiety, disturbed sleep with an increase in vivid dreams, nausea, excess salivation, tremor, weight loss, and increased body temperature. These symptoms usually resolve themselves within a week or two of stopping cannabis use.