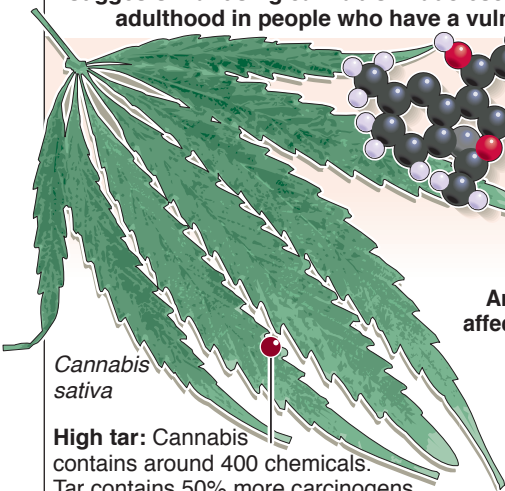


Health fears as cannabis downgraded

Cannabis is to be reclassified from a class B to class C drug in the UK, putting it on the same level as steroids and tranquillisers. But research suggests that using cannabis in adolescence may induce psychosis in adulthood in people who have a vulnerability to mental illness



Cannabis sativa

High tar: Cannabis contains around 400 chemicals. Tar contains 50% more carcinogens than tar from tobacco

Varying strength of cannabis

1960s: Cannabis imported from Middle East and Asia

THC content – Resin and grass: 4-5%

Today: New hybrid varieties, grown indoors in specially enriched soils

THC – Super Weed:	10%
Super Haze:	Up to 12%
Skunk:	8-13%
White widow:	Up to 19%

Increased risk of psychosis from regular cannabis use by age

Starting age 18 60%

Starting age below 15 450%

More likely (%)

100

200

300

400

500

Sources: British Lung Foundation; Institute of Psychiatry, London

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Active ingredient:

Molecule called *tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)*

Brain: THC releases

neuro-transmitter *dopamine*. Drugs that increase dopamine levels are linked to psychosis

Areas affected

cerebral cortex (concentration, perception)

hippocampus (memory)

cerebellum (movement)

Lungs:

Cannabis users hold smoke four times longer than tobacco smokers – increasing risks of respiratory diseases