

CANNABIS EDIBLES

NATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL BODIES
WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR OR TOWARDS YOUNG
PERSONS IN THE UK.



WHAT ARE CANNABIS EDIBLES?

There are many forms of edibles, including

- Sweets
- Cakes
- Chocolates
- Biscuits
- Syrups
- Butter/Spread
- Oils



Edibles contain cannabis oil which holds high amounts of THC – the psychoactive component of cannabis.

THC remains illegal in the UK as a class B controlled drug - therefore cannabis edibles are a class B drug.



RECENT SEIZURES

SWEETS



CHOCOLATE



VAPES



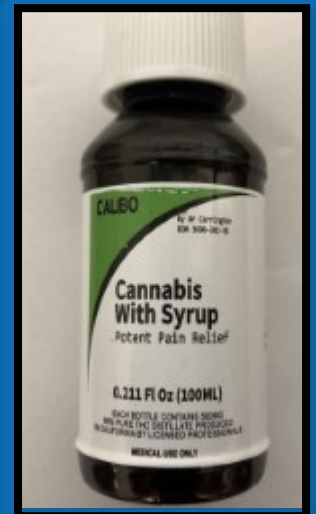
CAKES



SPREADS



SYRUPS



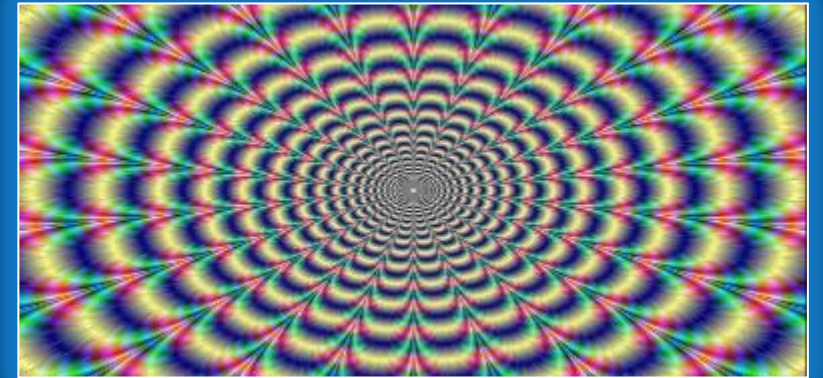
HOW EASY ARE THEY TO MAKE?

- Cannabis edibles are made by heating cannabis and the combining the extract with oil.
- The THC is extracted by the heat and is then absorbed into to oil.
- The oil is then strained of any remaining physical cannabis and is then cooled and “dropped” onto common bought shop sweets or homemade sweets/cakes.
- Cannabis edibles usually look no different to legitimate popular confectionary items .
- Cannabis edibles are then commonly sold in vacuum sealed packets to try and disguise the smell.



WHAT IS THC?

- THC is the psychoactive constituent in Cannabis and makes people feel 'high'.
- High doses of THC produce similar psychoactive effects to class A controlled drugs such as Magic mushrooms, LSD and class B psychoactive drugs such as Spice.
- Cannabis edibles usually take between 45 minutes – 2 hours to enter the blood stream and take effect. THC eventually reaches the cannabinoid receptors in the brain and is a far more potent and intense high that lasts far longer than smoking.
- High amounts of THC have much stronger physiological effects and can lead to kidney problems, liver problems, seizures, psychosis, and suicidality. Users are more likely to overdose on edible cannabis due to the strength of the THC, the ease of over-indulging and due to the process of the THC being broken down in the liver into a stronger form.



COMMON MYTHS

MYTH: CANNABIS DOES NOT HAVE MEDICINAL BENEFITS

FACT: CBD extract from cannabis has been found to ease the side effects of chemotherapy in cancer patients regarding chronic pain and sickness. There is also some research that CBD can ease epilepsy in young people. There have also been cases whereby THC has benefitted those who suffer from MS and other tremors. These cases however are from prescribed medicinal amounts – too much cannabis and THC can result in very negative side effects, both long term and short term, that can effect the mental and physical state of the user.

MYTH: CANNABIS HAS LESS SIDE EFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

MYTH: CANNABIS HELPS PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH

FACT: Cannabis can contribute to impaired judgment and increased susceptibility to mental health problems including:

- depression
- insomnia
- paranoid delusions

The susceptibility to these side effects is increased following large exposures to high amounts of THC.

FACTS: Research strongly suggests that cannabis use during adolescence and early adulthood can damage the part of the brain associated with learning and memory.



COMMON MYTHS

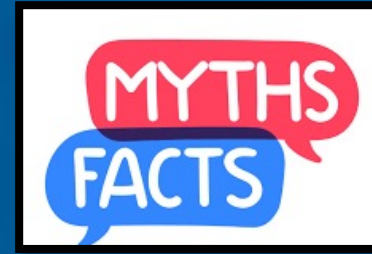


MYTH: CANNABIS ISN'T ADDICTIVE

FACT: Regular cannabis use can lead to withdrawal symptoms from the substance. These withdrawal symptoms can include:

- anxiety
- depression
- nausea
- difficulty sleeping

Users are therefore more likely to use cannabis to ease these symptoms and before long with rely on the drug to function daily.



MYTH: YOU CAN'T OVERDOSE ON CANNABIS



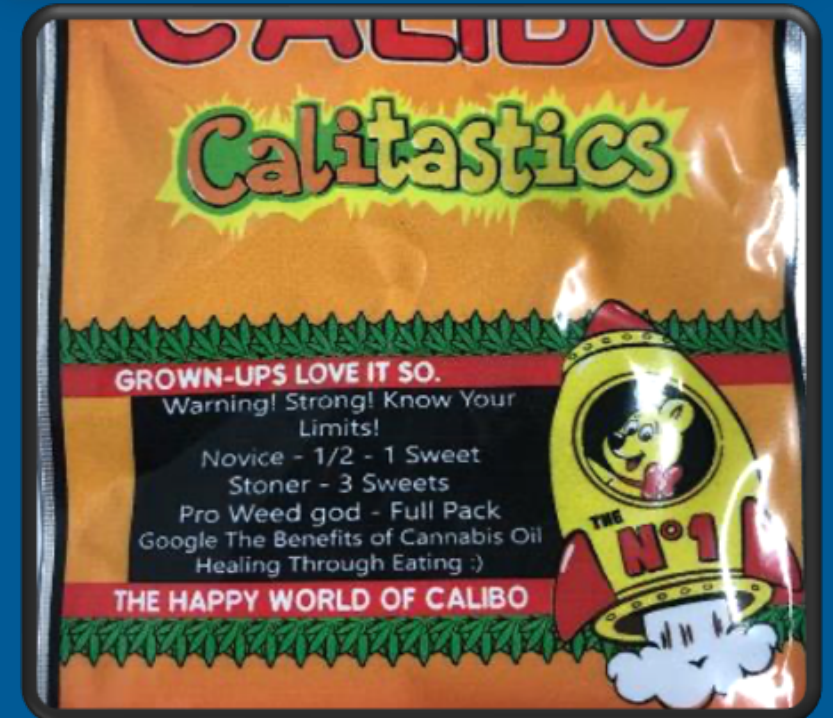
FACT: High amounts of THC can cause users to overdose on cannabis, especially those of a young age. Overdosing on cannabis can cause:

- violent and uncontrollable sickness
- breathing difficulties
- increased heart rate
- intense hallucinations
- paranoia
- panic attacks



DOSAGE

- 1 Cannabis edible can be equivalent to smoking 1 full cannabis joint
- When smoking cannabis, the effects are almost instant (15 seconds - 1 minute)
- Edibles usually take between 45 minutes – 2 hours to enter the blood stream and take effect
- Users become impatient for the effects to take place, resulting in them eating more cannabis edibles than is required for them to get any desired effect.
- When smoking the user has more control of how much they want to smoke, how much they inhale and are obtaining consistent even amounts of CBD and THC
- THC Edibles however cannot be 'dosed' accurately without professional equipment and are regularly ingested quickly and recklessly by users.



Cannabis: Inhaling vs Ingesting



To lower your risk of the harmful effects of cannabis, you need to understand the differences between the two most common ways of consuming it.

INHALING

— smoking or vaping —

Cannabis smoke or vapour delivers THC, the chemical that gets you high, into your lungs where it passes directly into your bloodstream and then your brain.



You will feel the effects from **seconds to a few minutes** of inhaling.

Full effects can peak within **30 minutes**.

Effects can last up to **6 hours after use**. Some residual effects can last up to **24 hours**.

START OF EFFECTS



PEAK EFFECTS



LENGTH OF EFFECTS



INGESTING

— eating or drinking —

Edible cannabis travels first to your stomach then to your liver before getting into your bloodstream and brain. The liver converts THC into a stronger form and this combined with the THC from the original product adds to the intensity of the high.



You will feel effects within **30 minutes to 2 hours** of ingesting.

Full effects can peak within **4 hours**.

Effects can last up to **12 hours after use**. Some residual effects can last up to **24 hours**.

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RISKS

Edibles contain much higher doses of THC compared to cannabis joints



The common short term side effects of THC are:

- Paranoia
- Memory loss
- Dizziness
- Nausea/sickness
- Difficulty sleeping

Consuming too much THC can result in more significant long term health problems such as vertigo and irregular forms of anxiety such as depersonalisation and derealisation. Symptoms of this include:

- Feeling detached from real life
- Forgetting personal information
- Becoming easily confused & losing train of thought
- Panic attacks

To see how edibles affect the brain, [CLICK THIS LINK](#)



Edibles often also have other substances added such as Spice (A Synthetic Cannabinoid) making them even more dangerous.

Injury/death through misadventure

Onset psychosis

EFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

- Edibles are marketed towards younger people through the packaging and confectionary types that are used by the dealers.
- The drugs appear professional, safe and appetising without any risks or safety issues explained.
- Edibles are seen as being just like smoking cannabis, however the reality is the THC content is far higher – meaning the drug could be compared to the class A controlled drugs such as LSD and magic Mushrooms.
- Younger people usually have a lower tolerance to THC, and are more likely to overdose on edibles due to the fact they are not aware of the strength or potency, and do not understand the risks of consuming too much THC.



26 children were studied in 2019 who had overdosed on edibles.
Most common symptoms were drowsiness and muscle weakness.
6 children were critical;
5 were in a coma;
1 needed breathing support.

Altered cognitive development

In high doses can lead to onset paranoia and psychosis

Impairment to short term memory

Impaired motor function

Decreased engagement with peers

Potential gateway to other more hardcore drugs

Decreased sense of accomplishment

Increased chance of overdosing

SUPPLY



- Edibles are usually sold via social media on apps such as Snapchat and Instagram where users make “stories” that show images that disappear after 24 hours
- Due to the vacuum packaging, edibles are regularly distributed via the postal service and disguised as legitimate sweets that do not emit any smell of cannabis
- It is believed that young people are the main target audience via social media for the substance due to the juvenile looking packaging and confectionary forms



DISTRIBUTION

- Changing times and new technology have seen increases in the use of mail delivery services to distribute controlled drugs as seen on the previous slide.
- Dealers can take their parcels to petrol stations, local stores and mail drops to get their drugs out to customers reducing the risk to themselves.
- Unclaimed mail with no return address containing anything edible should be investigated further.
- Packaging should be compared to examples here and contact made with your local Police station if anything suspicious is found.



WHAT SHOULD YOU BE LOOKING FOR?

- The packaging used is deliberately eye-catching towards young persons
- They often copy well known brands and imitate being imported from America
- Despite looking similar, there are several differences in packaging between cannabis edibles and legitimate sweets
- Any packaging found that does not look legitimate or has cannabis references on may contain cannabis edibles and should be seized appropriately



THE SIGNS

USA FLAG TO
IMITATE BEING
IMPORTED FROM
AMERICA WHERE
CANNABIS IS
LEGAL IN SOME
STATES

CANNABIS
JOINT ON
PACKAGING



18+ SIGN TO
APPEAR AS
LEGITIMATE
SWEETS
FOR ADULTS
ONLY

NAME
PARODY
OF
"HARIBO"

DOSAGE
INSTRUCTIONS AND
THC CONTENT:
NOVICE – 1/3 BAR
STONER – 2/3 BAR
PRO WEED GOD – FULL
BAR



WHAT DO I DO IF I COME ACROSS THEM?

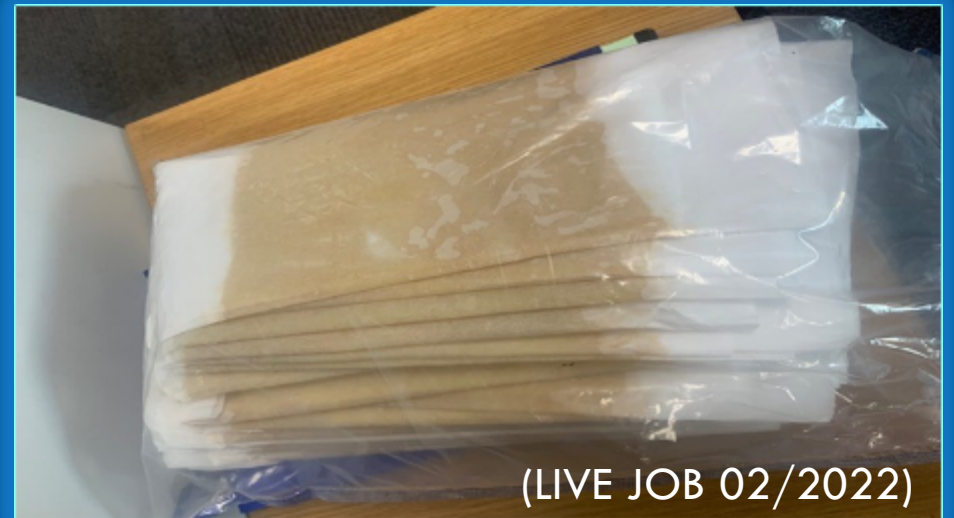


- **Professional persons -**
 - If packages are found believed to contain cannabis edibles, the product should be taken into your possession and the Police should be notified.
 - You are legally able to take possession to provide them to a lawful authority and this should be done as soon as possible. This will prevent any further risk they may pose.
 - Professional persons should ensure their actions and rationale are recorded and any information about the substance/package, the dealer, the manufacturer or the user is passed to lawful authorities.
- **Police officers -**
 - Police officers and Police staff to follow their own force direction around seizure and handling of instances of possession or supply of controlled drugs. Securing recovered controlled substances should be handled appropriately giving due consideration to the circumstances of the surrender and by whom.



SHATTER, WHAT'S THAT? – “THE CRACK OF CANNABIS”

- Shatter/Honey Oil is made by using butane gas. it can be smoked, mixed with e-liquid and vaped, heated into an oil and put into edibles and “dabbed” using a hot pipe or a specialised bong.
- The process of making the drug is a highly dangerous process. Butane is explosive and has resulted in reported fatalities.
- Locating significant quantities of butane canisters should be brought to the attention of the local Police to the area where they are found.
- Shatter can be between 5 - 10x as potent as Cannabis due to the high THC content produced by the pressure and the butane.



(LIVE JOB 02/2022)

HOW IS SHATTER MADE?

- Shatter is commonly made using simple and cheap equipment at home. The risky methods use can often result in large explosions and house fires.
- Homemade methods usually include butane gas and an extractor pipe. The pressure from the butane gas allows the cannabis to produce an extract that is then sprayed onto a dish.
- This is then heated to on an electric range to evaporate any butane in the extract. Shatter made into honey, oil, and wax forms.
- Butane gas is highly flammable and the homemade methods to produce BHO are extremely dangerous.

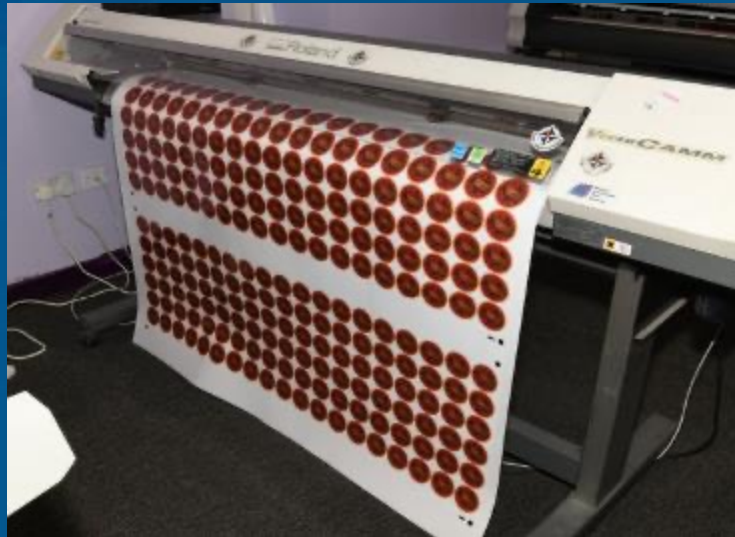
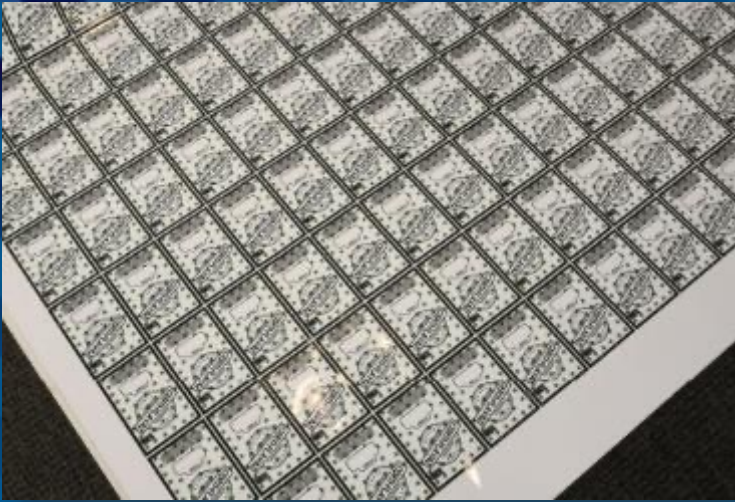


Any intelligence or indications of a Shatter compound must be reported immediately due to the high risk of explosion.

COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

- Industrial units in quiet business estates are often being used to supply on a commercial scale.
- A recent location entered by warrant located a substantial quantity of professional printing equipment associated with edibles distribution.
- The subsequent investigation established that this OCG (Organised Crime Group) were operating on a national scale distributing cannabis edibles and packaging from Scotland to London.





Photographs taken from Operation
MODEARM – West Yorkshire Police

Professional printing and computer equipment such as the above is used to print cannabis edible packaging and can be made specifically unique to order. The packaging is distributed both nationwide and internationally.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS EATEN EDIBLES?



- What have you taken?
- How many?
- Over what period of time?
- When did you take the last one?
- Taken anything else? (Mixing any drugs puts a person in far greater danger)
- Any other medical conditions?
- Obtain the packaging if it is possible.

All essential information to pass to A&E staff on patient handover. The information is also very useful to the Police.

Overdose Recovery Position



1. tilt head back, lift chin to open airway

2. turn to one side, place hand against chin

3. bend knee against floor

4. tilt head back, check breathing

5. call emergency and wait till it arrives

CONSULTATION GROUP

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