

Butane Hash Oil●

What is Butane hash oil (BHO)?

Dabs or dabbing are the names for the use of concentrated butane hash oil (or BHO). It is a relatively new method of administering/ingesting cannabis that involves the inhalation of highly concentrated tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main active chemical in cannabis. This concentrated form is produced through a chemical process using butane oil. Butane is used to extract the oils from the cannabis.¹

The use of butane hash oil is not a new practice, but it does appear to be gaining in popularity particularly in the USA but also here in Australia. This increase in use is thought to be associated with the liberalisation of cannabis use in the United States and Canada.^{1,2}

Reports suggest that butane hash oil can have a THC concentration of approximately 80% (in comparison with traditional cannabis which is about 10-25%).³

Other names

BHO, Marijuana wax, budder, honeycomb, shatter, dab, amber, oil, wax butter, sap³

How is it used?

Cannabis is traditionally smoked in 'joints', 'bongs' or vaporised but these methods are not effective ways of consuming butane hash oil as it becomes a 'runny liquid' when heated. A specifically designed 'bong' commonly known as an 'oil rig' is commonly used.³

There is anecdotal evidence that indicates people believe dabbing is a safer method of cannabis ingestion as opposed to a bong or joint due to the high potency of dabs, which reduces the number of times it needs to be taken to produce a 'high'.⁴

It has been reported that the home production of BHO (known as blasting) is hazardous as butane is flammable and highly volatile with a number of incidents such as explosions, fires and severe burns occurring in the US.¹

There is little known about the risks of 'dabs' compared to traditional cannabis but it has been proposed that the increased level of THC and the unique method of administration may increase the risk of dependence and intensify withdrawal symptoms.

Effects of BHO

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Butane hash oil affects every individual differently. Even the same person may have a different experience on separate occasions or over the course of their life. Some of the factors that influence these differences appear to be: ⁵

- size, weight and health
- whether the person is used to taking it
- whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- the amount taken
- the strength of the drug
- expectations of consuming cannabis
- the environment of the individual
- the individual's personality.

Low to moderate use of cannabis may produce the following effects:

- feelings of relaxation and euphoria
- spontaneous laughter and excitement
- increased sociability
- increased appetite
- dry mouth.

High strength cannabis in the form of butane hash oil may produce the following effects:

- relaxation
- reduced nausea
- changes to heart rate and blood pressure
- Pain relief
- excitement and restlessness
- confusion and paranoia
- anxiety and panic
- reduced attention rate
- decreased reaction times
- detachment from reality^{3, 6}

Long term effects

Long-term effects are dependent on how much and how often the cannabis is consumed and may also be affected by how the cannabis is consumed (e.g. vaporising a concentrate versus smoking the flower). Heavy, regular use of cannabis may eventually cause: ^{7, 8}

- tolerance to the effects of cannabis
- dependence on cannabis
- reduced cognitive functioning^{7, 8}

Withdrawal

There is some evidence that the use of higher potency cannabis is associated with greater risk of cannabis-related problems such as increased tolerance and an increase in the severity of withdrawal. Giving up cannabis after regular, heavy use over a long time is challenging, because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Withdrawal symptoms may last for only a week, but sleep may be affected for longer. Symptoms can include⁹:

- anxiety
- irritability
- loss of appetite and upset stomach
- sweating, chills and tremors
- restless sleep and nightmares.⁸

Reference list

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2. New Zealand Drug Foundation. About a drug: Dabbing and BHO, 2015 [Available from: <https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/matters-of-substance/may-2015/dabbing-and-bho/>].
3. DrugWatch. DrugWatch Information Sheet Butane Hash Oil (BHO), 2017 [Available from: http://www.thedrugswheel.com/drugwatch/BHO_Infosheet_DrugWatch_1_0.pdf].
4. Loflin ME, M.. . A new method of cannabis ingestion: The dangers of dabs?., *Addictive Behaviours*, . 2014 39(10):1430-3.
5. Parrott A, Morinan, A., Moss, M., & Scholey, A. *Understanding drugs and behaviour* 2004.
6. Homel PB, R. . *Marijuana legalisation in the United States: An Australian Perspective* 2017.
7. Colizzi M, Bhattacharyya, S. Cannabis use and the development of tolerance: a systematic review of human evidence. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioural Reviews*. 2018;93.
8. Scott J, Slomiak, ST., Jones, JD., Rosen, AFG., Moore, TM., Gur, RC. . Association of Cannabis with Cognitive Functioning in Adolescents and Young Adults. . *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2018;75(6):585-95.
9. American, Association P. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5 ed2013.

Always call an ambulance on triple zero (000) if an overdose is suspected: tell the paramedic exactly what has been taken. Paramedics are there to help and will not involve the police unless there is a danger to themselves or others.

Other help, support services and resources

Links to further help and support • adf.org.au/help-support/

Information on cannabis • adf.org.au/drug-facts/cannabis/

● Further information

DrugInfo • 1300 85 85 84

Free confidential information and advice about alcohol and other drugs (9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri)

Family Drug Help • 1300 660 068 • www.familydrughelp.com.au (Victorian-based)

Services are available to support those around you who may be affected by your drug use. As well as providing understanding, they can provide information about how best to help during treatment.

Family Drug Support • 1300 368 186 • www.fds.org.au (Australia-wide)



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