

WHAT happens to the mind and body when you smoke cannabis every day for a month?

Divorced mother-of-three Nicky Taylor set out to find out.

As part of a BBC documentary, she spent a month in Amsterdam, where she smoked a joint of cannabis every day.

The results were shocking, reports [The Daily Mail](#).

Having not smoked since she was a student, the first thing that struck Nicky was the strength of modern weed – and the associated paranoia.

Home-grown cannabis today has been genetically altered so that it contains 10 to 15 per cent THC, whereas naturally-grown cannabis contains only 3 to 5 per cent.

This amplifies the negative effects of the drug.

"I felt absolutely terrified," recalls Nicky.

"Paranoia set in, and I felt as if I was having a panic attack. At one point, I was simply too frightened to get out of my chair."

At one point during her investigation, scientific tests proved that, thanks to the drug, she had developed a level of psychosis well above that seen in individuals with schizophrenia.

On a daily basis, depending on the strength of cannabis she had smoked, she either spiralled into depression and paranoia or simply passed out and had to go to bed.

"I noticed very quickly that the stronger the variety of cannabis, the more paranoia and depression I experienced," she says.

"Some nights, particularly after smoking 'skunk', which is high in THC, I couldn't sleep at all and would be pacing my room, becoming more and more paranoid and thinking everyone I'd met at the cafe, as well as the BBC crew, was talking about me.

"But even the weaker varieties rendered me completely useless. I'd often go to bed at 8pm and be totally crashed out until morning. I felt constantly groggy and unmotivated, I couldn't wake up in the mornings and I'd find myself longing to go back to bed all day.

"By the end of a month of smoking cannabis every day, I felt as if my mind had been turned into treacle and nothing made much sense to me any more."

If Nicky's mind seemed to be getting smaller, her waistline was expanding. Over the course of her investigation, she gained half a stone, due to the drug's tendency to bring on cravings for junk food.

Once back in the UK, Nicky visited the Institute of Psychiatry, where, for the final stage of her investigation, she took part in a unique experiment.

Scientists there are interested in the effect of the ratio between the drug's two main

components - THC and cannabanoid - and the levels of psychosis induced in the user, and are undertaking trials in which volunteers are injected with both pure THC and THC mixed with cannabanoid.

Nicky agreed to do this, too, and following each injection, she underwent a series of psychological tests designed to assess her state of mind.

Even though injecting the drug means it reaches the bloodstream more quickly than if it's smoked, the results were shocking.

"With the mixture of THC and cannabanoid - which is roughly equivalent to the sort of 'grass' people smoked in the Sixties, I felt very giggly and silly," says Nicky.

"I felt groggy afterwards and wouldn't want to feel that way all the time, but there wasn't anything too troubling about the experience.

"The psychological tests indicated that while I was flippant and had lost any sense of care and responsibility, I had not become psychotic."

However, Nicky's experience with pure THC - more akin to the strong "skunk" favoured by cannabis users today - was far more sinister.

Within minutes of receiving the injection, she was overcome by morbid thoughts.

"I was suddenly gripped by the idea that the scientists conducting the experiment were characters from a horror film who were somehow out to get me," she says.

"I later found myself fantasising about jumping out of a window and crawling away somewhere that I would never be found. I was increasingly agitated and convinced they were trying to trick me in everything they said to me."

Most alarmingly, she also took a test, in the form of a series of questions about her state of mind, in which a score of four points and above indicates significant psychosis of the level seen in people with schizophrenia - she scored 14.

"I couldn't believe it when I saw my result - it was terrifying to think I was experiencing greater psychosis than someone with schizophrenia," says Nicky.

"It proved without doubt that the drug was playing havoc with my mind, and inducing a psychotic state that I would never have reached without it."

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