

Chapter Nine

Water Cure and Green Diet

Every Mouthful Counts

Smoking is only one of three ways of consuming cannabis through the mouth. You can also cook and eat it as you would a food. You can also infuse it into a tincture and then drink it as you would any beverage. After smoking cannabis, you still should consider eating or drinking, just of something other than cannabis. So welcome to the Department of Food and Beverages.

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

Smoke is both hot and dry, so the very act of smoking, be it of tobacco or of cannabis, parches your mouth and throat. The ignition devices, be they matches or lighters, further dry out your mouth. The smoking of cannabis goes one step further. Cannabis smoke is hot, it's dry, and its THC content inhibits salivation.

Cannabinoid receptors reside exactly where you'd expect to them to be, in your brain. They also are found elsewhere throughout the body, including in the salivary glands of the mouth.¹ THC ingested by any means, be it by smoking or by eating, interacts with the salivary glands and causes them to dry up.² You'd think THC would cause more saliva production rather than less, but the science says that it stimulates the glands to shut down.³ After smoking cannabis, your mouth can remain parched for up to six hours.⁴ That's a long time to be left feeling high and dry.

TOOTH OR CONSEQUENCES

More than a mere discomfort, a dry mouth poses a health risk. Saliva dissolves and washes away sugars and bacterial deposits, so any decrease in salivary production can cause or worsen bad breath,⁵ tooth decay,⁶ and gum disease.⁷ Though cannabis smokers risk gum disease more than tooth decay,⁸ both can lead to tooth loss. Just take a look at the bleeding gums⁹ and missing teeth¹⁰ of crack smokers, notorious for holding their butane lighters to their lips right under their noses while they suck in the fumes. Or rather, don't you dare look at them. The photos of inside their mouths, illustrated in some medical journals, may make you puke, or at least inspire you to throw away your lighter.

Soon after smoking, scrubbing with a toothbrush and rinsing with mouthwash will freshen your stale breath, will remove any deposits of tar or ash that might discolor your teeth, and the brushing will remoisten your gums. While you're at it, you might as well also brush your tongue and the roof of your mouth. Outside of your home, however, thorough brushing is usually not very practical.

Soon after smoking, if your parched mouth and throat are screaming out to be replenished and soothed, restore moisture to your dry mouth by rinsing it with water. Even better, drink the dang stuff. Drink your water straight, pure and undiluted, not as a beverage that happens to contain water. Carbonated sodas or caffeinated drinks, coffee or tea, beer or wine, and hard booze all are beverages that contain water, but they are not water. Just as you should avoid sugar and salt in anything you eat, so you should avoid those two white plagues in anything you drink, and especially in anything you drink soon after smoking.

If you are adequately hydrated, your respiratory tract should remain moist and your excreted mucus thin, despite your smoking. But most people are not fully hydrated. Water is an undervalued nutrient. Fresh water from a mountain spring, a backyard well, or a rainwater barrel is best appreciated unflavored, or rather flavored only naturally, which is to say by nature. Once you develop a taste for pure water, you will appreciate water as the planet Earth's milk, in which case you will sipping at the breast of Mother Earth. Do become a heavy drinker.

In a pinch, if you can't drink water, resort to a sugar-free chewing gum. Chewing activates your salivary glands. If there's nothing to drink or chew, but only something to eat, as you'd expect chomping on food