



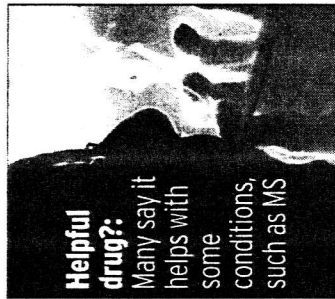
though.  
Under 18s will be taken to a police station and given a formal caution, though.

#### RE-CLASSIFICATION

It is re-classified as a 'C' grade drug, alongside valium. Previously it was a 'B' grade drug, like amphetamines, regarded as more dangerous.

#### WHERE IS IT FROM?

Eighty per cent of cannabis in this country is estimated to come from Morocco. Increasing amounts are grown in UK 'factories', using sophisticated agricultural light and heating equipment. This drug is generally far stronger than normal cannabis, a fact which concerns the authorities.



#### Helpful drug?

Many say it helps with some conditions, such as MS



#### Campaign:

Government hand out leaflet Cannabis users inhale more deeply and for longer than smokers, adding to the harm. It is, however, widely regarded as beneficial for some conditions, with MS sufferers reporting positive results on their symptoms. In 1998 the House of Lords authorised new research into medical uses.

#### EFFECTS

Effects vary but many users report talkativeness, relaxed, happy attitudes. Negative effects can be hallucinations, disorientation, depression and in extreme cases suicidal tendencies

## Different ways cannabis can be used

■ The pulp of hemp can be used as fuel, and also to make paper.

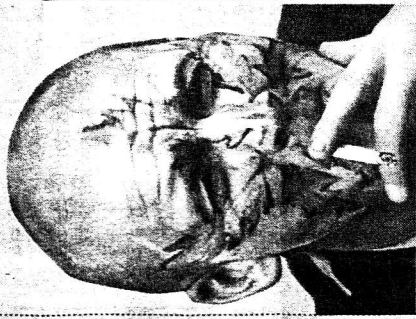
Oil from the seed can be used in as a base for paints and varnishes.

■ Cannabis when taken as a drug is usually smoked, although it can also be eaten.

■ Joints are the most common method of smoking but a wide range of pipes, bongos, hookahs, and other devices are also used.

■ Cannabis can be used in cooking, such as in a cake

■ Often people will cook with the leaves of the plant rather than the buds.



# The positive benefits of using cannabis to help relieve illness

People who use cannabis to relieve the pain of illness hope today's downgrading of drug from class B to C will make them less likely to be criminalised. Health writer **Kate Lahive** reports.

SYLVIE Brown has lived with the effects of Multiple Sclerosis for the last nine years.

She was just 21 years old and studying for a chemistry and European studies degree at Sussex University when she began to suffer fatigue and experienced feelings of numbness in her body.

When her studies finished where she was diagnosed with

MS, the movement disorder caused a range of problems such as making walking difficult.

Since then she has been determined to get the best out of life and has found her own way of coping.

Sylvie, aged 30, from Upperthorpe, believes a combination of regular exercises, wholesome diet and a positive attitude have prevented her condition from deteriorating.

And she says the occasional joint of cannabis helps when she suffers pain.

"I have leg spasms and cannabis allows me to relax and sleep," she explains.

"It is less harmful than alcohol which causes people to get drunk and fight - that doesn't happen with cannabis as people are so relaxed."

"I think a change in classification

cation is long overdue. "The reality is many people use it.

"Cannabis has positive effects on my health.

"I don't suffer from a lot of pain, but when I get muscle spasms in my legs at night it does help. I've tried painkillers but they're not as effective."

Sylvie, a self-employed website designer, says she never been worried about getting caught with cannabis, or of the potential risk she runs of getting a criminal conviction for using the drug.

"It is not a problem for me to get hold of it," she said.

"For older ladies it may be more difficult as they may need to ask around. But it's not something I've ever worried about."

**"It seems crazy that we can get hold of steroids and other potentially more harmful drugs, which are legal, when we can't even have a joint".**

Sylvie Brown, who suffers from Multiple Sclerosis



for legalisation of cannabis for medicinal purposes. I can't wait for the cannabis pill," said Sylvie, a former Tipton school pupil.

Her weapons against the onslaught of MS include physical exercise and a good

mental attitude. Despite disability Sylvie manages yoga and swimming and has a positive attitude to life.

Sylvie found out that steroids prescribed to help her condition during relapses had little effect on her condition.

But she did her research and now relies on a diet rich in fruit, vegetables, fish, meat and pulses, and dairy free products to help her as healthy as possible.

Sylvie continued: "I think it is definitely a good thing. It seems crazy that we can get hold of steroids and other potentially more harmful drugs, which are legal, when we can't even have a joint."

"I only use it occasionally, and I don't suffer pain as part of my MS, but if I did I would use it more."