



Orientation to Ontario

HEALTH EFFECTS OF CANNABIS

Cannabis affects the same biological system in the brain that is responsible for brain development. Youth and young adults are more likely to experience harms from cannabis because their brains develop until about age 25. The earlier you start consuming cannabis, the more harm it can do.

Everyone's response to cannabis differs and can vary from one time to the next.

Learn about cannabis and its effects on health.

- start using cannabis at a young age;
- use cannabis frequently (daily or almost every day);
- have a personal or family history of schizophrenia.

Youth are especially vulnerable to the effects of cannabis, as research shows the brain is not fully developed until around age 25. This is because THC, the substance which gives the "high" in cannabis, affects the same machinery in the brain that directs brain development.

You should also be aware that the use of higher potency cannabis products has also been associated with a greater risk of developing schizophrenia. Stopping or reducing cannabis use has been shown to improve outcomes; however, some health effects may not be fully reversible even when cannabis use stops

Can I smoke cannabis while pregnant or breastfeeding?

Just like with tobacco and alcohol, a pregnant woman or a new mother's use of cannabis can affect her fetus or newborn child. The substances in cannabis are carried through the mother's blood to her fetus during pregnancy. Also, they are passed into the breast milk following birth. This can lead to health problems for the child. Since there is no known safe amount of cannabis to use during pregnancy or breastfeeding, the safest approach is to not use cannabis. If you need more information or support, it is recommended that you talk to your healthcare provider.

What are the known benefits of using cannabis?

There is some evidence of potential therapeutic uses for cannabis or its component chemicals (cannabinoids) and many Canadians report using cannabis for medical purposes for health problems such as chronic pain, nausea/vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy, and spasticity with multiple sclerosis. While cannabis can be used by some people for their health problems, determining whether cannabis is appropriate to treat an individual's symptoms is best made through a discussion with a health care practitioner.

Can smoking cannabis trigger schizophrenia?

Although the exact underlying mechanism is still largely unknown, in some people, cannabis use increases the risk of developing mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. This is particularly true for those who:

Health Canada has information for health care professionals and authorized patients on the use of cannabis and cannabinoids for medical purposes.

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This includes information on potential therapeutic uses, dosing, warnings, and adverse effects. For more information, visit canada.ca/en/health-canada/topics/cannabis-for-medical-purposes.html

What are the effects of cannabis secondhand smoke?

Any kind of smoke is harmful. Studies have shown that cannabis smoke contains many of the same harmful substances as tobacco smoke. Like smoking cigarettes, smoking cannabis can damage your lungs and can cause bronchitis-like symptoms, coughing, and wheezing which can, for example, affect athletic performance. While the effects of second-hand smoke from tobacco are well known, more research is needed to better understand the health effects of second-hand smoke from cannabis.

How can I help a friend who is addicted to cannabis?

There is no script for talking with your friend about cannabis addiction and it may be difficult to try to convince him or her to stop using it. You can start by encouraging your friend to compare his or her current life situation to how they were when they limited their cannabis use. They might admit that they felt healthier, happier, and more productive.

When someone experiences problematic substance use (including cannabis), they must seek help. Many resources are available to answer questions, offer advice or give hands-on help. You can help your friend by preparing a list of organizations that are located in your area, with websites and phone numbers.

RESOURCES

ConnexOntario

ConnexOntario provides free & confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol & drugs, mental illness, or gambling. Call at **1-866-531-2600** or visit connexontario.ca

211 Ontario

211 is a free helpline that connects you to services and programs in your area 24/7. Visit 211ontario.ca or call 2-1-1 to find services for mental health, addictions, and more.

CAMH

To contact the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) call **416 535-8501**, option 2 or visit camh.ca.

