

KNOW THE FACTS.

USE YOUR INSTINCTS.

Using cannabis?

Tips to reduce your risk



It is safest to not use cannabis (marijuana, weed, pot) for non-medical reasons. But, if you choose to use, here are some ways you can use more safely:



Keep sharp.

The brain continues to develop until your mid-20s. Regular and heavy cannabis use before the brain is fully developed can make it harder to do well at school or on the job. It may also be harder to stop using cannabis if you start at a young age.



Know what you're using.

Don't use synthetic cannabis like "Spice" or "K2." Synthetic cannabis is not cannabis: it is made by spraying unregulated chemicals onto any type of shredded plant. These chemicals can be toxic and may result in serious health problems.

Go easy on your lungs.

Like smoking cigarettes, smoke from cannabis can harm your lungs and make it harder to breathe. Vape or use edible cannabis instead of smoking. If you do smoke cannabis, avoid deep inhalation and breath-holding as this increases the amount of toxins brought into the lungs.



Pace yourself.

"Start low, go slow." Wait to feel the effects of cannabis before deciding whether to use more. It takes seconds to minutes to feel the effects of smoking or vaping and 30 minutes to 2 hours to feel the effects of edibles.

One at a time.

Complications are more likely if you mix drugs. For example, mixing cannabis with alcohol can cause extreme anxiety, nausea, vomiting and fainting. Mixing cannabis with tobacco also increases health harms. Tobacco contains nicotine which is very addictive and can make it harder to cut down or quit.

Limit use.

Have days where you don't use. More problems are associated with more frequent use.

Be aware of bad reactions and mental health effects.

Cannabis can lead to scary reactions, like feeling paranoid or even seeing or hearing things that aren't there. You are at increased risk if you have a personal or family history of mental health problems, such as psychosis.



Stay safe if impaired.

Cannabis impairs coordination and reaction time. The law does not allow young or new drivers to have any cannabis or other drugs in their body when driving. Barely high is still too high.

Plan a safe ride if you're thinking about using cannabis. Being high can also affect your ability to operate other machinery, play sports or ride a bike.

Protect yourself and others.

If you're pregnant, be aware that cannabis can harm the fetus or newborn child. Speak with your health care provider if you need medicine to help with nausea. Cannabis can also be passed to the baby in breastmilk.

Keep edibles locked in a safe place and make sure they are labelled to prevent people from taking cannabis by mistake.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR HELP

Talk to your Health Care Provider or call:

Connex Ontario (Drug and Alcohol Helpline):
1-866-531-2600

Kids help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Alternatives for Youth (12-23 year olds):
905-527-4469

Alcohol, Drug, and Gambling Services
(age 23+): 905-546 3606



Hamilton

Adapted from:

•Fischer, B., Russell, C., Sabioni, P., van den Brink, W., Le Foll, B., Hall, W., Rehm, J. & Room, R. (2017). Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG): An evidence-based update. American Journal of Public Health, 107 (8). DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2017.303818.

•The Link. Use Responsibly. Ottawa Public Health.

•University of Victoria, Take Care with Cannabis, Centre for Addictions Research of BC.

•Canadian Nurses Association. Harm Reduction for Non-Medical Cannabis Use. January 2018.

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USE YOUR INSTINCTS.

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