

## Understanding Cannabis

### 1. What is Cannabis

- THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main psychoactive chemical
- Cannabidiol (CBD) is another chemical that may have some medical benefits
- Medical Cannabis is known to help with chronic nerve pain, palliative care, nausea/vomiting from chemotherapy and spasticity from multiple sclerosis. Do not help for anxiety, other nausea/vomiting or pain conditions.
- Can be smoked (handheld pipe, vaporizer, water pipe etc.), eaten (not legal yet), or put on (oil, cream etc.)
- You may feel: time distortion, calm/relaxed feeling, increase in appetite and heart rate, cognitive impairment, you may say or do things you wouldn't normally, increased senses, followed by depressant period, may experience anxiety or paranoia

### 2. Who use Cannabis

- Most commonly used drug in Canada
- Even it being illegal, 40% of Canadians have used cannabis
- 70% of Canadian Cannabis users are age 25 or older
- 20% of Canadians aged 15-24 years used Cannabis in the past year
- 10% of Canadians have used Cannabis in the past year.

### 3. What are the health effect of Cannabis

- **Effects on the body:** damage to lungs, second-hand smoke can be harmful, use while pregnant and breastfeeding can cause harm to the baby
- **Effects on the Brain**
  - Short term: Confusion, slower reaction time, anxiety, fear or panic. Can affect memory, learning and attention
  - Long term: Can affect ability to make decisions, personality and ability to achieve goals.
  - For people under 25, brain is still developing and can have lasting impacts for life. Can affect attention, judgement, decision making and ability to learn. Changes the way one think, act and feel can have impacts on major life areas. Can lead to poor performances in school/drop out
  - Mental Health: ↑ risk for mental illness, depression or anxiety, especially for people under 25. If there is family history, avoid using.
- **Side effects**
  - Very common (10-30%): intensely happy/uneasy, sedation/relaxation, difficulty speaking, numbness, disconnected thoughts, muscle twitching, changes in heart rate/blood pressure
  - Common (1-10%): Impaired memory, confusion, blurred vision, visual hallucination, loss of touch with reality/self, problematic use
  - Uncommon but serious (<1%): intense vomiting, loss of motivation
- **Overdose**
  - Can cause toxic effects
  - If combined, the risk goes up
  - Signs of poisoning: change in heart rate, extreme nausea/vomiting, anxiety, extreme confusion, panic attacks or paranoia, seizures
- One can be Cannabis dependent, and may experience withdrawal symptoms

#### 4. Cannabis Laws

- Federal laws: By legalizing, better protect health and enhance public safety, less accessible to young people, and make it less profitable for illegal dealers and growers.
- Need to know the rules around when traveling within Canada. Taking cannabis across borders remain illegal.
- Impaired Driving: GDL program – 30 days license suspension, 7 day vehicle seizure, must remain in GDL program for 2 years, criminal penalties apply
- Impaired Driving: 90 day license suspension, 3 day vehicle seizure, mandatory remedial education, one year in ignition interlock program
- Calgary bylaw- cannot use recreational cannabis in public. Cannot use where alcohol will be consumed. And enforced by Calgary Police Service, City of Calgary Peace officers and Calgary Transit peace officers. Call 311 to report a potential violation.
- Alberta law – minimum age 18
  - AGLC manage the wholesale and distribution. Licensed growers are strictly regulated
  - Private stores to sell. Government will do online sales. Edibles are not legal yet.
  - Can grow up to 4 plants per household, both indoor and outdoor.
  - Adults can legally possess up to 30g in public. Under 18 will be charge criminally if possess more than 5 grams.
  - Advertising and packaging are restricted.
  - Smoking or vaping is not allowed on any hospital property, school property or child care facility property, in or near a playground, a sports or playing field, a skateboard or bicycle park, a zoo, an outdoor theatre, an outdoor pool or splash pad, or from any motor vehicles.

#### 5. Youth and Cannabis

- Youth use substances due to many different reasons
- Signs to watch for: declining school work and grades, deteriorating relationships with family, abrupt changes in friends, less openness and honesty, abnormal health issues or sleeping habits.
- Talk to your child – early and openly about cannabis
- Stay connected, talk about it, be positive, focus on safety, be informed, be supportive, be an example
- Keep the conversation going: encourage, share, remind and repeat.
- Youth still have many protective factors around them to help them make right choices.

#### 6. Reduce your Risk

- Start using later in life
- Choose low-strength product, lower THC or higher CBD
- Do not use synthetic cannabis
- Smoking is the most harmful way and avoid inhaling deeply if you do
- Try to limit your use

#### 7. Resources

- [Drugsafe.ca](https://www.drugsafe.ca)
- [Alberta.ca/cannabis](https://www.alberta.ca/cannabis)
- Addiction Helpline (Alberta Health Services) 1-866-332-2322
- Poison & Drug Information Service (PADIS) 1-800-332-1414
- Youth can contact Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868, [kidshelpphone.ca](https://www.kidshelpphone.ca)
- Cannabis talk kit, <https://www.drugfreekidscanada.org/order-cannabis-talk-kit/>
- Free 24 hour telephone health information, services and nurse advice with interpretation - **811**