

## Cannabis and Health

Using cannabis is a personal choice, but it can have short- and long-term effects on your health. Cannabis can affect your thinking, physical co-ordination and control, and increase your risk of accidents, injuries, reproductive issues and mental health problems, including dependence. Smoking cannabis can increase your chances of having lung problems.

## Cannabis Use and Others

Remember that cannabis use can also harm those around you. Be considerate of other people's health and preferences if you choose to use cannabis.

## If You Develop Problems

Some people who use cannabis develop problems and may become dependent. Don't hesitate to seek support if you think you need help controlling your cannabis use, if you experience withdrawal symptoms or if your use is affecting your work, school or social and family life. You can find help online, or through a doctor or other health professional.

## Endorsements

The LRCUG have been endorsed by the following organizations:



Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health

## Acknowledgment

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# 10 WAYS

## to Reduce Risks to Your Health When Using Cannabis

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## Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)

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## Reference

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.

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CANADIAN RESEARCH INITIATIVE IN SUBSTANCE MISUSE

INITIATIVE CANADIENNE DE RECHERCHE EN ABUS DE SUBSTANCE

# The following **10 recommendations** suggest ways to use cannabis more safely, based on the best available scientific evidence.

- 1** Remember that every form of cannabis use poses risks to your health. **The only way to completely avoid these risks is by choosing not to use cannabis.** If you decide to use cannabis, follow these recommendations to lower risks to your health.
- 2** The earlier in life you begin using cannabis, the higher your risk of serious health problems. Teenagers, particularly those younger than 16, should delay using cannabis for as long as possible. **You'll lower your risk of cannabis-related health problems if you choose to start using cannabis later in life.**
- 3** Higher-strength or more powerful cannabis products are worse for your health. If you use products with high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, the main mind-altering ingredient in cannabis, you're more likely to develop severe problems, such as dependence or mental health problems. Cannabidiol (CBD), another cannabis ingredient, can counteract some of THC's psychoactive effects. **If you use, choose low-strength products, such as those with a lower THC content or a higher ratio of CBD to THC.**
- 4** **Don't use synthetic cannabis products.** Compared with natural cannabis products, most synthetic cannabis products are stronger and more dangerous. K2 and Spice are examples of synthetic cannabis products. Using these can lead to severe health problems, such as seizures, irregular heartbeat, hallucinations and in rare cases, death.
- 5** **Smoking cannabis (for example, smoking a joint) is the most harmful way of using cannabis because it directly affects your lungs.** There are safer, non-smoking options like vaping or taking edibles that are better for your lungs. Keep in mind that these alternatives aren't risk-free either.
- 6** **If you choose to smoke cannabis, avoid inhaling deeply or holding your breath.** These practices increase the amount of toxins absorbed by your lungs and the rest of your body, and can lead to lung problems.
- 7** The more frequently you use cannabis, the more likely you are to develop health problems, especially if you use on a daily or near-daily basis. Limiting your cannabis use to occasional use at most, such as only using once a week or on weekends, is a good way to reduce your health risks. **Try to limit your use as much as possible.**
- 8** **Cannabis use impairs your ability to drive a car or operate other machinery. Don't engage in these activities after using cannabis, or while you still feel affected by cannabis in any way.** These effects typically last at least six hours, but could be longer, depending on the person and the product used. Using cannabis and alcohol together further increases your impairment. Avoid this combination before driving or operating machinery.
- 9** Some people are more likely to develop problems from cannabis use. **Specifically, people with a personal or family history of psychosis or substance use problems, and pregnant women should not use cannabis at all.**
- 10** **Avoid combining any of the risky behaviours described above.** The more risks you take, the greater the chances of harming your health as a result of cannabis use.

**Please note: These recommendations are aimed mainly at non-medical cannabis use.**