

RESOURCES AND HOTLINES

Hong Fook Mental Health Association

Provide community mental health programs and services for Asian Communities
<http://www.hongfook.ca>
 (416) 493-4242

HF Connecting Health Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic

Provide primary care services through the inter-professional team
<http://www.hongfook.ca/clinic>
 (416) 479-7600

Access CAMH

Provide access to centralized information, intake and scheduling of most CAMH services for mental illness, including addictions

<https://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/access-camh>
 (416) 535-8501 ext. 2

Connex Ontario

Addiction, Mental Health, and Problem Gambling Treatment Services

<https://www.connexontario.ca/>
 1 (866) 531-2600

Gerstein Centre

24/7 community based mental health crisis service

<http://gersteincentre.org/>
 (416) 929-5200

Good2Talk

24/7 free, confidential helpline providing professional counselling and information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being to post-secondary students in Ontario

<https://good2talk.ca/>
 1 (866) 925-5454

Kids Help Phone

24/7 national service open for young people in any moment of crisis or need, by phone, text, mobile app or through the website

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>
 1 (800) 668-6868

This pamphlet is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to replace any medical advice. Always seek support from a health professional if you need help controlling your cannabis use, if you have withdrawal symptoms or if your use is affecting your life.

Information in this pamphlet is excerpted from the following sources: Canadian Pediatric Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Evidence Exchange Network for Mental Health and Addictions, Foundation for a Drug-Free World, Government of Ontario, Kids Help Phone, National Institute on Drug Abuse, and Pyramid Healthcare.

(Version 1: Printed March 2019)

CANNABIS Facts & Risks



Funded by:  



WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis sativa, also known as the hemp plant, has been cultivated for centuries for industrial and medical use, and for its psychoactive, or mind-altering, effects. Marijuana (grass, weed, pot, dope, ganja and others), hashish (hash), hash oil (weed oil, honey oil) all derive from the cannabis plant.



MEDICAL CANNABIS VS. RECREATIONAL CANNABIS

Medical cannabis is used to treat certain health needs. It is used under the supervision of a trained health care professional whereas recreational cannabis is not.

Cannabis Regulations in Ontario

-  You must be **19 and older** to buy, use, possess and grow **recreational** cannabis.
-  You are permitted to purchase up to **30 grams** (about one ounce) of dried **recreational** cannabis at one time for personal use.
-  You are permitted to possess a maximum of **30 grams** (about one ounce) of dried cannabis in public at any time.
-  You are permitted to grow up to **four plants per residence** (not per person).

-  Driving impaired by cannabis is **illegal** and you can face criminal charges. Zero tolerance for young (21 or under), novice (G1, G2, M1 or M2 licence) and commercial drivers.
-  Consuming recreational cannabis in the workplace remains **illegal**.
-  Please check local municipal bylaws, lease agreements, and the policies of employers and property owners, to see where you can use cannabis, both medical and recreational.



YOUTH

Youth take drugs to "fit in", "look grown up", "escape or relax". In Ontario, about one in five students in grades 7-12 reports using cannabis in the past year. Youth who are South Asian or East/Southeast Asian have lower odds of using cannabis than other racial groups or mixed race.

Exposure to cannabis during developmental periods such as adolescence has greater adverse effects than in adulthood, when brain function is fully developed. Regular use leads to increased neural activity making the brain work harder to perform tasks.

There is also a strong association between daily cannabis use and depression in adolescent and young adult.

SENIORS

Seniors are less likely to use cannabis than the regular population. Many seniors use cannabis for medicinal reasons, including pain and insomnia.

Seniors may have distinct risks. Drowsiness and dizziness are two known side effects of cannabis that could contribute to risk of falling. Using cannabis also points to an increased risk of arrhythmia. Other studies have shown that cannabis might trigger a stroke in people with coronary artery disease. The effects of cannabis could have a larger impact on seniors who already have cognitive impairment. Furthermore, cannabis increases the risk of complications such as bleeding, low blood pressure and unstable blood sugar levels when used with certain medications.



PREGNANT WOMEN

Pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers should avoid using cannabis.

Smoking cannabis during pregnancy has been linked to low birth weight, and problems with attention, memory, and problem solving in children. Cannabis produces chemicals that pose a serious threat to the health of babies regardless if it is being ingested, inhaled or applied on the skin.

For breastfeeding mothers, chemicals from cannabis can be passed to babies through breast milk. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is stored in fat and is slowly released over time, meaning babies could still be exposed even after their mothers stop using cannabis.





People can have very different experiences with cannabis

Some may feel relaxed, lively, talkative, giggly and even euphoric, while others feel tense, anxious, fearful and confused. The kind of experience you may have can vary from one drug-taking episode to another, usually because of the amount taken, the method used and the frequency of regular cannabis use.

How cannabis affects you depends on:

- how much you use
- how often and how long you have used it
- whether you smoke, vape or eat it
- your mood, your expectations and the environment you are in
- your age
- whether you have certain pre-existing medical or psychiatric conditions
- whether you have taken any alcohol or other drugs (illegal, prescription, over-the-counter or herbal)

SIGNS AND SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

BRAIN

- Altered senses (for example, seeing brighter colors)
- Changes in mood
- Altered sense of time
- Lowered reaction time
- Impaired memory
- Impaired attention
- Impaired verbal learning
- Difficulty with thinking and problem solving
- Lack of body coordination (impairing safe driving or playing sports)
- Loss of sense of personal identity

MIND

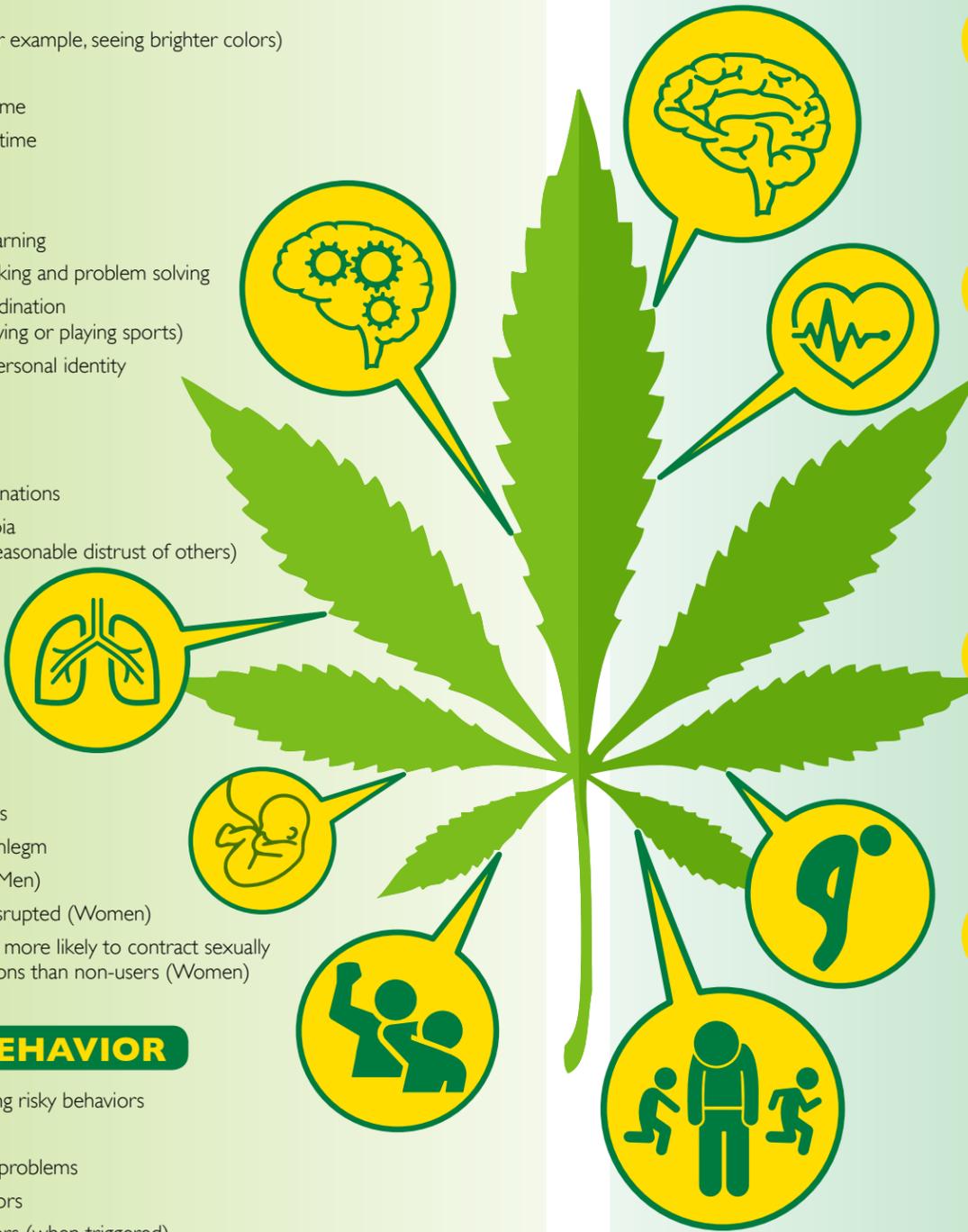
- Temporary Hallucinations
- Temporary paranoia (extreme and unreasonable distrust of others)
- Panic attack

BODY

- Red Eye
- Rapid heart beat
- Sleepiness
- Breathing problems
- Daily cough and phlegm
- Sexual problems (Men)
- Menstrual cycle disrupted (Women)
- Up to seven times more likely to contract sexually transmitted infections than non-users (Women)

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Difficulty controlling risky behaviors
- Disorientation
- More relationship problems
- Poor social behaviors
- Aggressive behaviors (when triggered)
- Lower impulse control



LONG-TERM IMPACTS

BRAIN

- Decline in IQ
- Long-term impaired attention, memory, and verbal learning
- Difficulty making decisions, controlling risky behaviors, and completing goals

MIND

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Develop suicidal thoughts
- Addiction
- Potential development of opiate abuse
- Psychosis in individuals with a personal or family history of mental illness. (Youth who are regular users have twice the risk of developing schizophrenia.)

BODY

- Lung damage (if cannabis is inhaled), including chronic cough and bronchitis
- Increased risk of stroke
- Increased risk of heart attack
- Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (intense nausea and vomiting)

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Poor school performance and higher chance of dropping out
- Greater chances of being unemployed or not getting good jobs
- Lower life satisfaction
- Intimate partner violence
- Antisocial behaviors (eg. stealing money or lying)
- Financial difficulties
- Increased welfare dependence

10 WAYS TO REDUCE RISK WHEN USING CANNABIS

Delay using cannabis as late as possible in life, ideally not before adulthood.

Avoid using if you are **pregnant**, or if you or family members have a **history of psychosis or substance use problems.**

Choose low-potency products – Those with **low THC** (Tetrahydrocannabinol) **and/or high CBD** (Cannabidiol) content.

Use cannabis in ways that **do not involve smoking** – choose less risky methods of using like vaping or ingesting.

Stay away from synthetic cannabis products, such as **K2** or **Spice.**

If you do smoke, **avoid deep inhalation or breath-holding.**

Occasional use, such as one day per week or less, is better than regular use.

Do not operate a vehicle or machinery while impaired by cannabis. Wait at least 6 hours after using. Remember that **combining alcohol and cannabis makes you more impaired.**

Your actions add up. The more risks you take, the more likely you are to harm your health.

Not using cannabis at all is still the best way to protect your health (unless you use with a medical recommendation).

