

Women and Cannabis



Cannabis

- Cannabis (e.g., weed, hashish, hash, pot, indica) is produced from the Cannabis sativa and Cannabis indica plants.
- Cannabis contains more than 500 chemicals. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in cannabis that makes you feel 'high'.
- Cannabis can be smoked, vaped, used topically, or ingested in foods or drinks, for either recreational or medicinal purposes to treat chronic pain, nausea, or symptoms associated with cancer, HIV/AIDS, and multiple sclerosis.
- Short-term effects of cannabis last around 1-4 hours although they can linger for up to 8 hours.
- Using cannabis can produce feelings of euphoria ("being high"), relaxation, altered perception of time, and increased appetite.
- Some people experience mental health side effects such as anxiety, panic, psychosis, and mild paranoia.
- Cannabis can affect short-term memory, attention, motor skills, and slows your reaction time.

Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

These Guidelines acknowledge that deciding to use cannabis is a personal choice, but there are risks to your health and well-being. The guidelines can help women think about their cannabis use and reduce immediate and long-term harms.

Some recommendations include:

- Choose cannabis products with low THC content.
- Avoid synthetic cannabis products.
- Avoid harmful smoking practices (inhaling deeply, breath-holding).
- Reduce how often you use cannabis.
- Do not drive or use machinery for at least 6 hours after cannabis use.
- Avoid combining cannabis and alcohol as this results in greater impairment.
- Avoid cannabis if you are at risk for mental health problems, trying to become pregnant, are pregnant, or breastfeeding.

Cannabis and Your Health

- Cannabis affects people differently. The way cannabis affects you depends on many factors, including:
 - Your age, body weight and size, hormones, and metabolism
 - Your family history
 - How much and how often you use cannabis
 - Who you are with, where you are, and what you are doing
 - Whether you've taken other substances (e.g., alcohol, prescription drugs, illicit substances, etc.)
 - The type and amount of food in your stomach
- Women report using cannabis for pain management, stress and anxiety relief, insomnia and sleep disturbances, sexual pleasure, pregnancy-related symptoms, and as an alternative to pharmaceuticals.
- Following the inhalation of THC, women report a more pronounced "high" than men.
- Women progress to regularly using cannabis and Cannabis Use Disorder faster than men.
- Cannabis use may affect ovulation and menstrual cycle length. These effects can lead to changes in hormonal balance, potentially affecting fertility and overall menstrual health.
- Regular cannabis smoking is associated with chronic cough and phlegm. Quitting smoking, or using non-smoked forms of cannabis, can relieve these symptoms.
- Symptoms of withdrawal from cannabis, if they occur, are usually mild and happen typically 24-48 hours after stopping use. They may include anxiety, sleep disturbance, irritability, depressed mood, and loss of appetite. Physical symptoms (e.g., chills, headache, shakiness) may also occur.
- Scientists are still learning about the health effects of cannabis and its use as a treatment. Talking with a trusted healthcare professional can be helpful to weigh the benefits and risks of using cannabis.



Cannabis and Pregnancy

- Using cannabis while pregnant may affect fetal health, contributing to low birth weight and preterm birth.
- Potential effects on child health and behaviour are not yet fully understood but may include attention problems and hyperactivity, as well as brain development affecting memory and learning at school.
- Some women use cannabis during pregnancy to treat nausea or 'morning sickness'. There is some research showing that women who use cannabis report relief from these symptoms; however, other research shows an increase in cannabis-related nausea and vomiting (Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome).
- Using cannabis and nicotine or tobacco together increases risks to maternal and fetal health.
- Second-hand cannabis smoke is also harmful as it contains harmful chemicals. It is beneficial to avoid second-hand smoke when pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you are using cannabis for medical or health reasons, it is recommended that you talk to your health care provider to weigh the benefits of using cannabis against the potential risks to you and your fetus.
- If you have problems stopping or reducing recreational cannabis use while pregnant, talk to a trusted health care provider about services in your community that can support you.

Until more is known about the short- and long-term effects of cannabis on fetuses, babies and young children, it is safest to avoid using cannabis while pregnant.

Cannabis and Breastfeeding

- Cannabis is passed on to babies through breast milk. There is little data available to inform decisions about cannabis use while breastfeeding.



Cannabis and Parenting

- Cannabis use may affect your ability to react to emergencies and respond to your child's needs.
- Smoke away from your children and outside of the house to avoid exposing them to second-hand cannabis smoke.
- Keep cannabis in a safe place where your children cannot reach it. Cannabis in food products, such as cookies and brownies, can be especially tempting to curious children.
- If your child eats or drinks cannabis by accident, seek medical attention right away. Your child might have problems walking or sitting up and may get very sleepy or act confused. Serious effects of cannabis on children are less common, but can include problems with breathing, seizures, and comas.

Resources and References

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