

# Women and Cannabis



## Cannabis

- Cannabis (e.g., weed, cannabis, hashish, hash, pot) is produced from the Cannabis sativa plant and can be smoked, inhaled as a vapor, or ingested in foods or drinks.
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in cannabis that makes you feel 'high,' but cannabis also contains more than 400 other chemicals.
- Depending on how much THC is in the cannabis, how you use it and how your body responds, the short-term effects of cannabis can last around 1-4 hours. There are different types of cannabis and the effects depend on the amount of THC it contains.
- Using cannabis can produce feelings of euphoria ("being high") and relaxation, changes in perception and sense of time, and increased appetite. Some people also experience anxiety, panic, and mild paranoia.
- Cannabis affects your short-term memory, attention, and motor skills, and slows your reaction time.

## Cannabis and Your Health

- Medical cannabis is prescribed to treat health issues such as nausea and vomiting, chronic pain, and symptoms associated with HIV/AIDS and multiple sclerosis.
- Symptoms of withdrawal from cannabis, if they occur, are usually mild and may include sleep disturbance, irritability and loss of appetite.
- Regular cannabis smoking is associated with chronic cough and phlegm. Quitting smoking, or using non-smoked forms of cannabis, is likely to relieve these symptoms.
- Some research suggests that cannabis use can affect ovulation and the length of your menstrual cycle.

## Cannabis and Pregnancy

- Using cannabis while pregnant may affect the fetus. 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, while breastfeeding, and around children.
- If you are using cannabis for medical reasons, talk to your health care provider about whether the benefits of using cannabis for medical purposes outweigh the potential risks to you and your fetus.
- If you have problems stopping or reducing your recreational cannabis use while pregnant, talk to your health care provider about services in your community that can support you.
- When you are pregnant, whenever possible, avoid being in a room with people who are smoking cannabis.
- Some women are interested in using 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, more research is needed to understand the potential health risks. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about this.
- Scientists are still learning about the effects of cannabis use during pregnancy on babies, children, and youth. Some research shows that babies born to mothers who use cannabis during pregnancy are more likely to be born smaller than other babies and have low birth weight. Some research shows that cannabis use during pregnancy can affect children's' behaviour (with attention problems and hyperactivity), brain development (problems with memory or learning at school), and the likelihood that they will use cannabis and other drugs as a teenager.



**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

- Scientists are still learning about whether cannabis in breast milk can affect babies in the long-term. It is best not to use cannabis while breastfeeding as it is passed on to babies through breast milk and can be found in their feces (poop).
- Babies who have been exposed to cannabis through breast milk may become drowsy and have a hard time latching properly.

# Cannabis and Parenting

- Cannabis use may affect your ability to safely take care of your baby.
- Some types of cannabis can make people feel very sleepy and can make them sleep more deeply.
- Second-hand cannabis smoke can cause some of the same health problems for your children as second-hand tobacco smoke. Smoke away from your children and outside of the house.
- 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.

## Canada's Low Risk Cannabis Usage Guidelines

Canada's Lower-Risk Use Guidelines state: "Cannabis use is a personal choice, but it comes with risks to your health and well-being." Some of the recommendations to lower your risk include:

- Identify and choose lower-risk cannabis product
- Don't use synthetic cannabinoids
- If you smoke cannabis, avoid harmful smoking practices
- Limit and reduce how often you use cannabis
- Don't use and drive, or operate other machinery
- Avoid cannabis use altogether if you are at risk for mental health problems or are pregnancy

Download the guidelines from [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

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This resource was developed by the Centre of Excellence for Women's Health ([www.bccwh.bc.ca](http://www.bccwh.bc.ca)) through the support of the Education and Training Council, Alberta FASD Cross Ministry Committee (<http://fasd.alberta.ca>) and reviewed by experts from the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse ([www.ccsa.ca](http://www.ccsa.ca)) and the Canada FASD Research Network ([www.canfasd.ca](http://www.canfasd.ca)).

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Updated: September 2017