

Cannabis

Cannabis, also called marijuana, weed and pot, is a drug that comes from a plant consisting of dried flowers, fruiting tops and leaves. Cannabis contains hundreds of chemical substances known as cannabinoids. Cannabis acts as a hallucinogen that alters perceptions, thoughts and feelings.

How is cannabis used?

- Smoking it as a joint, spliff, or blunt. The main difference is the type of paper used to roll it and it is often mixed with tobacco. You can also smoke it using pipes and bongs.
- Vaping it. Breathing in dried or liquid cannabis through a vaping device.
- Drinking or eating it. Mixing it into teas, sodas, baked goods, gummies and candies, these are called edibles.
- Dabbing it. This is breathing in very hot vapours from heating cannabis concentrates.
- Consumed as a cannabis tincture (alcohol based extract) on its own or added to food or drinks.



Why are youth at risk?

Adolescents are particularly at risk for cannabis-related harms because:

- Their brains are undergoing rapid, extensive development until about the age of 25.
- Chronic cannabis use is associated with memory, thinking and attention difficulties, particularly among those who start using cannabis in early adolescence.
- Chronic use might also increase the risk of psychosis, depression and anxiety, in addition to respiratory conditions and possibly lung cancer.
- Cannabis use over time can become addictive.

According to the [Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#), smoking cannabis before 16 increases the risks for serious health problems. Users who start young are more likely to develop mental health and education problems, to experience injuries or other substance use problems. Therefore, delaying cannabis use at least until after adolescence can help prevent these harmful effects.

Cannabis and the law

The Cannabis Act came into effect October 17, 2018 and aims to regulate the production, possession, distribution and sale of cannabis across Canada.¹

The Cannabis Act has several measures that help prevent youth from accessing cannabis. These include both age restrictions and restricting promotion of cannabis.¹

According to the [Ontario Student Drug Use and Mental Health Survey 2017 report](#),

- ✓ 1 in 5 students (or 19%) in grades 7 to 12 say they used cannabis at least once in the past year.
- ✓ Most used a bong, joint or edibles.
- ✓ Cannabis use significantly increases with each grade in high school.
- ✓ Males and females are equally likely to use cannabis.

It is important to remember that 81% of students report that they have not used cannabis at all in the past year.⁴

Cannabis resources

Curriculum Support

[School health for professionals Substance Resources](#)

[OPHEA Teaching Tools Cannabis Resources](#)

[Government of Canada - Health effects of Cannabis](#)

Talking about Cannabis

[Cannabis talk kit](#)

[The Effects of Cannabis Use during Adolescence report](#)

[School Mental Health Assist Fact Sheet for parents](#)

[Talking pot with youth: a guide for youth allies](#)

[Cannabis in Canada: Get the facts](#)

[Halton Region Cannabis Information](#)

Other Reports

[Canadian youth perceptions on cannabis report](#)

[Cannabis communication guide -Canadian Centre on substance use and addiction](#)

In Ontario, adults who are 19 years or older are able to purchase non-medical cannabis online from government-regulated Ontario Cannabis Stores.²

For youth under the age of 19, it is illegal to grow, possess, buy, sell, or share cannabis.

It is prohibited to give or sell youth cannabis, or use youth to commit a cannabis-related offence. Penalties for such offenses are up to 14 years in jail.¹

The updated *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* regulates the smoking and vaping of cannabis (including medical) in Ontario. You cannot smoke or vape cannabis in any enclosed workplace or public place, along with other places such as in schools and on school property or in vehicles.²

Drug-impaired driving will remain illegal under the Criminal Code of Canada. Zero Tolerance for young, novice and commercial drivers is enforced.³

Crossing Canada's international borders with any quantity of cannabis is illegal.³

Student's intentions when cannabis is legalized

Students were asked about their intentions to use cannabis if it is legalized. About 2/3 (62%) of students in grades 7-12 do **NOT** intend to use cannabis even if it is legalized for adults.

- 11% state that they will use cannabis as often as they do now
- 8% indicate that they will try cannabis
- 4% will use cannabis more often that they do now
- 14% are not sure about their intentions to use
- Younger students are more likely to indicate that they will not use cannabis if legalized

OSDUHS, 2017⁴

References

¹Government of Canada. (2018) Cannabis Act. S.C.2018, c.16. Available from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-24.5/FullText.html>

²Government of Ontario. (2018). Smoke Free Ontario Act. Available from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17s26>

³Government of Canada (1985) Criminal Code R.S.C., 1985, c.C-46, Sec 253 (1). Available from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/>

⁴Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2017) Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey Report. Available from: <http://www.camhx.ca/Publications/OSDUHS/2017/index.html>