

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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Talking about Cannabis

Although cannabis is now legal for those 18+, there are health risks. It's important that Albertans consider these risks and how use of cannabis can impact their day-to-day life, well-being and long-term health. With so much confusing information out there, AHS wants to clear the air and talk about what cannabis legalization means for you, the health risks that come with use, and what you can do to lower your risk if you choose to use.

There are many short and long-term effects of cannabis use. Some key effects include:

- Cannabis use can impact brain development, especially in those under 25 because, up until that point, the brain is still developing.
- Cannabis can also create lasting impacts that stay with you for life. It could affect your attention, judgment, decision making and ability to learn.

And if you choose to use, choose lower-risk products, avoid mixing with alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, and do not use and drive. Also, be aware:

- Cannabis is much more potent product than it has been in past
- Cannabis affects everyone in different ways. Use as little as you can and wait to see how you react.
- Effects can be felt within seconds to minutes of smoking, vaporizing or dabbing cannabis and can last up to 24 hours.
- When eating/drinking cannabis it can take several hours to feel the full effect. Start with a small amount and wait for several hours before you take anymore.

Talking to young adults and youth under 18

Have conversations early that reflect your own values toward the use of drugs and other substances such as alcohol and cigarettes.

It's important to talk about the risks that come with using cannabis before 25. Until then, the brain isn't fully developed and cannabis use can lead to problems that impact memory, learning, attention, judgment and decision making.

A good approach is to understand the facts. Taking anything that changes the way you think, act and feel could have consequences on major life areas. This could include poor performance in school and dropping out of things you enjoy.

If you know [someone who is under 18](#), and they're using or considering using cannabis, encourage them to think about where they do it, who they are with, why they are using, and what they are doing while using.

Remember this. Whether or not they express it, [youth and teens care about your opinion](#). It matters and can help with decision making.

If you have children

Consider how to keep children safe in relation to cannabis:

- Do not smoke cannabis in the home or around children
- Keep cannabis and all drugs (alcohol, tobacco and tobacco-like products) locked up, out of sight, out of reach and in their original containers

If a child is exposed to cannabis and shows signs of distress, contact [Poison & Drug Information Service \(PADIS\)](#) (toll free 1-800-332-1414) or [Health Link](#)(call 811 or 1-866-408-5465 for internet phone users).

For more parenting resources, please visit [Healthy Parents, Healthy Children](#).