

## 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](mailto: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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**Proposed publication date:** Jan. 18, 2021

**Content provided by:** Alberta Health Services, [myhealth.alberta.ca](http://myhealth.alberta.ca)

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## Using cannabis safely

Are you thinking of using cannabis? Are you already using?

Cannabis is a psychoactive substance that has many short- and long-term health risks including: impairment, memory issues, mental health problems, lung damage and risk of dependency and cannabis use disorder.

If you are using, ensure that you read the product labels. Know what and how much you're using. Choose products that have lower levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) or a higher ratio of cannabidiol (CBD) to THC.

If trying a new form of cannabis, remember that some people who consume edibles (such as brownies, cookies or drinks) may consume too much and experience bad reactions. It is important to start with a low dose and go slow.

Cannabis use can cause severe nausea and vomiting for some people. This is called Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS).

The risk of experiencing CHS increases when cannabis use is frequent (weekly or more), long-lasting (over a year or more) and may be associated with using cannabis products that contain higher levels of THC.

To avoid experiencing CHS:

- Limit your cannabis use as much as possible, such as one day a week or less, on the weekend or days off. Frequent use is associated with a higher risk of health problems.

- Keep all your cannabis, regardless of type, locked up, in their original containers/packages and out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Remember that edibles such as brownies, beverages or soft chews can look appealing to children. It's important not to leave these products in areas that are easy to access – countertops, for instance, cupboards, pockets or backpacks.
- If you choose to use cannabis, remember that sharing your inhaled device (joint, vape, pipe, bong, etc.) increases your risk of COVID-19. Now is a good time to use the “one device, one person” rule.
- Smoking cannabis can suppress your immune system and make you more prone to infection. Because COVID-19 is a respiratory illness, the healthier your lungs are, the better. Now is a good time to take a break from smoking or vaping.

While edible products provide a lower-risk alternative to smoking/vaping, they can affect you much differently. Here are a few steps to reduce your risks with edibles:

- Remember that it can take up to four hours to feel the full effects of edible cannabis. Taking more within that time can increase the risk of adverse effects. Be patient, start low and go slow.
- Edibles may affect you for up to 12 and even 24 hours. Be aware that you may be impaired for a significant time.

For more information about health effects or lower-risk use of cannabis, visit [DrugSafe.ca/cannabis](https://www.drugsafe.ca/cannabis).

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's use of alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs, please contact the Addiction Helpline at 1-866-332-2322 (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week)