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## Student Wellness Centre

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UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN

# What is Cannabis?

Cannabis comes from the plant *Cannabis Sativa* and can be brown, grey, or green in color. The plant's leaves and flowers produce many chemicals including cannabinoids, terpenoids (aroma chemicals) and flavonoids (flavor chemicals).

## Modes of Consumption and Forms of Cannabis:

**Smoking** of dried herb through bong, joints, spliffs, pipes, or blunts Immediate onset of effects and lasts a few hours. Can cause harm to lungs.



**Vaping** of concentrates or juices may be less harmful on your lungs but only with reputable cartridges

**Dabbing** of waxes, shatter or other concentrates has extremely high amounts of THC and can cause immediate negative effects.



**Eating** of cannabis-infused items or edibles takes much longer to onset (up to 2 hours) and lasts much longer.

**Topically** onto sore joints or muscles in the form of oils, creams, or lotions.

Onsets within 20-30 minutes and can last around 12 hours.

## Weeding Through

The two main chemicals found in cannabis are:



### THC

**(tetrahydrocannabinol):** the chemical ingredient that gives the plant its mind-altering effects.

**CBD (cannabidiol):** the chemical ingredient that **does not** produce psychoactive effects but potentially offers therapeutic benefits. CBD can also counter some effects of THC.

Different strains of cannabis will have different ratios of chemicals and therefore the effects will vary from strain to strain.

## When Using: How to Lower Your Risk

### 1) Lower-Risk Cannabis Products

Products with higher THC content may cause more harm. Products with high CBD to THC ratios reduce some of the

risks. If you use, it's best to know what you are using.

If you doesn't know the ratio of chemicals in what you're using, they **start low and go slow**.

## **2) Natural Cannabis Products**

Compared with natural products, synthetic cannabis products (i.e. K2 and Spice) can have unpredictable effects and in some cases, life-threatening effects. If you use, give preference to natural products and avoid synthetics.

## **3) Reduce Exposure to Cannabis Smoke**

Vaporizers or edibles limit the risk of harms on the lungs from cannabis smoke. Edibles or cannabis tea should be consumed slowly as one can get much higher for much longer than expected. Use small amounts and wait at least one hour to feel the effects before using more.

## **4) Use Smart Smoking Practices**

Reduce toxins in the lungs through shallow puffs. About 95% of the THC in the smoke is absorbed in the first few seconds so you don't need to puff hard or hold your breath.

## 5) Know If You're at Higher Risk

**Age:** Being young increases the likelihood of adverse health effects.

The later in life you start using, the lower the risk of

developing

health,

educational,

cognitive, and social problems.

Saskatchewan Medical Association suggests waiting until 21 years.



- **Family history of psychosis or substance use disorders:** Cannabis can trigger symptoms of a mental health problem.
- **Pregnancy:** As with other substances, cannabis could cause harm to the fetus.
- **Stress:** Look for healthier ways to cope with pressures and negative moods.

Consider abstinence as the best way to limit all harm

## 6) Limit Use

Occasional use has less risk. If you use, limit use only on weekends or one day a week.

## **7) Wait At Least Six Hours Before Driving**

Cannabis impairs your ability to drive safely. Wait six hours (or more) after using before driving or using machinery. Listen to your body as you may need more time to be able to drive safely. Six hours might not be enough.

## **8) One Substance at a Time**

Combining cannabis use with other substances, such as alcohol or prescription drugs, may cause stronger and more unpredictable reactions. For instance, when used with alcohol, a person may experience nausea and/or vomiting, or react with panic, anxiety, or paranoia.

**Tips from cannabis users who choose to use safely:** [https://www.globaldrugsurvey.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/High-Way-Code\\_Cannabis1](https://www.globaldrugsurvey.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/High-Way-Code_Cannabis1)

## **Bad Trips: What to do**

If someone is using cannabis, there is a chance they may have a bad experience, or “bad trip,” which may

include sweating, nausea, numbness in the face, and shortness of breath. This can happen when someone takes a dose much higher than they are used to or expected.

What to do during a bad trip:

- go to a safe place and sit down
- try to relax and prevent anxiety or fear
- remember the effects are only temporary
- talk to someone you trust to remain grounded

As of 2018, no one has died from cannabis alone, but if you feel in extreme danger, seek medical advice.

## Blurb on Herb: Did You Know

- **47.3%** of USask students reported that they **have tried** cannabis. **23.5%** have used in the last month. **52.8%** reported they have **never used** (2019 National College Health Assessment)
- THC is stored in your fat cells. Drug test results can be positive for **1**

**week to 3 months** depending on the test

## What are the Effects?

Cannabis affects each person differently. Short term effects can include red eyes, laughter, sleepiness, increased hunger, anxiety, paranoia, slowed reaction time, and can affect memory and attention span.

Long term effects can include respiratory problems as well as mental health concerns such as damaged memory, depression, anxiety, and psychosis, especially for those who initiate use at a young age.

**Just because cannabis is legal, doesn't mean it is without risk. Research is ever growing to better understand the effects of cannabis.**

## Cannabis and Dependency

Research suggests high potency and frequent use of cannabis may lead to psychological and physical dependency.



Problematic cannabis use may be characterized by the three C's of Addiction:

- Loss of **C**ontrol (after you start using)
- **C**ompulsion to use
- Use despite negative **C**onsequences

Link to Cannabis Use Disorder Test to help self-identify problematic cannabis use:

<https://prevention.dasa.ncsu.edu/aod/about-aod/cannabis-use-disorder-test/>

## Community Addictions Services

Anyone can refer individuals to Community Addictions Services: clients themselves, family, friends, employers, or other professionals. **If you feel you need help, call Adult Mental Health Services Centralized Intake: 306-655-7777**

## Know the Law

Saskatchewan Law states any person 19 and over can:

- possess up to 30 grams of legal dried cannabis or equivalent in non-dried form
- share up to 30 grams of legal cannabis with other adults
- purchase dried or fresh cannabis and cannabis oil from a provincially licensed retailer
- grow up to 4 plants per residence for personal use from licensed seed or seedlings
- make cannabis products, such as food or drink, at home provided that organic solvents (alcohols, acetone, benzene, etc.) not be used

**So how much is 30 grams?** Depends on characteristics of specific product but generally 30 grams is about a sandwich Ziploc bag and makes about 40 joints. Below is a photo of one gram by Mike Deal of the Winnipeg Free Press.



### **Remember:**

- **Saskatchewan has zero tolerance for driving high**
- **Consuming in public places is prohibited**

Given that the Government of Saskatchewan has prohibited cannabis use in public places, **cannabis use is not allowed on University of Saskatchewan campuses.**

This pamphlet has been adapted from *Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines* published by Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

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## **Additional Resources**

[bit.ly/usaskcannabis](https://bit.ly/usaskcannabis)

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