

Cannabis and Health Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What are the short-term impacts of cannabis use on health?

Short-term impacts of cannabis use may include:

- Happy feelings and relaxation;
- Anxious or depressed feelings;
- Hallucinations and psychosis;
- Sleepiness;
- Forgetfulness;
- Problems with paying attention and thinking clearly;
- Increased appetite;
- Increased heart rate;
- Impaired co-ordination and slow reaction times (e.g. while driving a vehicle); and
- Dry mouth and throat.

2. What are the long-term impacts of cannabis use on health?

Long-term impacts of cannabis use may include:

- Increased risk of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and psychosis, particularly among those with a family history of these illnesses.
- Difficulties with memory, attention, concentration, and thinking or reasoning skills when cannabis is used frequently (every day or more than once per day).
- Smoking cannabis may lead to the following respiratory issues:
 - Coughing;
 - Wheezing;
 - Shortness of breath;
 - Tightness of the chest; and
 - Worsening of asthma symptoms.

3. What are some of the health risks associated with cannabis use?

- In some people, cannabis use increases the risk of developing psychosis, such as schizophrenia, especially in those who:
 - start using cannabis at a young age;
 - use cannabis frequently (daily or almost every day); and/or
 - have a personal or family history of psychosis and/or schizophrenia.
- Cannabis use during adolescence is associated with changes to the brain that can impair its development and functioning. This is because the brain is not fully developed until around age 25.

4. Is cannabis safer than tobacco?

Cannabis is not a safe alternative to tobacco. Cannabis smoke contains many of the same chemicals as tobacco smoke. These chemicals can have a negative impact on health by causing respiratory issues and/or cancer. People who use cannabis by smoking it can risk greater exposure to harmful chemicals because the smoke is deeply inhaled or held in the lungs for longer periods of time.

5. Is it safe for children and young people to consume cannabis?

It is not safe for children or young people to consume cannabis or be exposed to second-hand cannabis smoke.

Cannabis use impacts areas of the brain that are still developing until young adulthood (about 25 years of age). Using cannabis frequently at a young age can increase the risk of developing psychosis, such as schizophrenia.

Cannabis use may also reduce motivation, school performance, and impact learning.

6. Is it safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women to consume cannabis?

It is not safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women to consume cannabis.

Cannabis use during pregnancy can lead to lower birth weight of the baby and can have an impact on development and behaviour of children and adolescents.

The main mind altering chemical in cannabis (THC) can accumulate in the breast milk of nursing mothers. Due to potential risks to the mother and child, nursing mothers are discouraged from using cannabis.

7. Are there any dangers associated with second-hand cannabis smoke?

Currently, research is limited on the risks of second-hand cannabis smoke. However, it is known that cannabis smoke contains many of the same cancer causing chemicals as tobacco smoke. Children and young people, as well as pregnant women, should not be exposed to second-hand cannabis smoke.

8. What are the differences between medical cannabis and recreational cannabis?

Medical cannabis is prescribed by a doctor for the treatment of a medical condition. Medical cannabis requires a prescription and is obtained through a regulated and licensed producer in Canada.

Recreational cannabis is obtained without a prescription and is used for a variety of purposes. Recreational cannabis is currently illegal; it is usually obtained from

black-market sources that are unlicensed and unregulated. This can pose greater health risks because the potency and purity of the products are often unknown.

9. Is it possible to become addicted to cannabis?

Yes, it is possible to become addicted to cannabis. Some behaviors associated with cannabis dependency may include:

- Failing to fulfill major duties at work, school, or home;
- Giving up important social, work, or recreational activities because of cannabis use;
- Consuming cannabis often and in larger amounts, or over a longer period of time than intended;
- Being unable to cut down on or control cannabis use.

If you would like to get help for cannabis dependency, you can speak with a doctor or mental health nurse at your local health centre. You can also call the Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line for anonymous and confidential telephone support toll-free at 1-800-265-3333.

References for the above information are available upon request from the Department of Health.