

Even though many states allow adults to legally use cannabis, that does not mean it is safe for everyone.

Today, it is a good idea for health care providers to discuss the risks of cannabis use with every patient. This is certainly true for providers who prescribe cannabis for medicinal use. Some people do find relief from medical cannabis for a discreet number of conditions or side effects, and this should be discussed with their provider. Many adults use cannabis recreationally, so you should consider talking to every person in your care.

Use this infographic to start the conversation and address some of the common myths, misperceptions, and facts.

### Important Terms to Know



#### Cannabis

Refers to all products derived from the cannabis sativa plant, which contains 500+ chemical substances. Also known as marijuana or weed.



#### THC

Refers to tetrahydrocannabinol, which is an addictive, psychoactive compound found in cannabis that results in a high.



#### CBD

Refers to cannabidiol, which is a compound found in cannabis that is not psychoactive and does not produce a high.



### Legal Does Not Mean Harmless

- ✓ Always use medicinal cannabis products exactly as directed.
- ✓ Never combine cannabis products with alcohol or other substances, it can lead to unpleasant or harmful side effects.
- ✓ Cannabis today can be many times stronger than decades ago, in some cases up to 95% THC in concentrated THC products.
- ✓ Any cannabis use by young people is not safe and has significant short- and long-term risks.
- ✓ Long-term use of cannabis by anyone can cause severe and lasting damage to health.
- ✓ CBD is not currently regulated—items that contain CBD are not FDA-approved, and CBD can have risks and side effects.

### Many Types of Cannabis Products

Today, there are many forms of high-THC products that people can consume and use:

- ✓ Edibles
- ✓ Capsules
- ✓ Concentrates
- ✓ Flowers
- ✓ Oils
- ✓ Tinctures
- ✓ Topicals
- ✓ And more!



### Smoking and Vaping

People can smoke or vape high-THC cannabis in several forms, such as hash oil, wax, shatter, and more. This affects the lungs due to the inhaled smoke and is linked to an array of other health risks.

### Edibles

These can contain high levels of THC and are very potent, yet take longer to get into the bloodstream. Due to that delayed onset, people may ingest more than necessary, suffer from acute intoxication, and be very impaired.

## Cannabis and Health Risks

### Brain Health

- ✓ Studies suggest short-term cannabis use can cause problems with memory, thinking, and coordination.
- ✓ Any cannabis use by young people can impact brain development and studies link it to cognitive impairment, lower academic performance, and other health risks.

### Fetal Health

- ✓ Anyone who is pregnant should not use cannabis -- risks include low birth weight, developmental delays, and learning disabilities.

### Cardiac Health

Research shows that:

- ✓ Daily users (medicinal or recreational) have a higher risk of heart failure.
- ✓ People who use cannabis and are hospitalized for any reason have a higher risk of a major heart- or brain-related event.

### Lung Health

Research shows that cannabis smoke:

- ✓ Damages lungs in similar ways to other kinds of smoking.
- ✓ Causes chronic bronchitis and damages the cell linings of large airways.
- ✓ Can lead to chronic cough, phlegm production, wheezing, and acute bronchitis.

### Young People

- ✓ Today's cannabis comes in many forms. None of them are safe for kids.
- ✓ If your patients use cannabis for any reason, ensure they keep it out of reach of kids and pets.
- ✓ If your patients allow minors to use their cannabis, they could be in legal trouble.



## Cannabis and Driving

Just like alcohol, people should NOT drive after using cannabis in any form.

Cannabis use can negatively impact:

- ✗ Coordination
- ✗ Decision-making
- ✗ Perception
- ✗ Reaction time



## Cannabis and Mental Health

Research links cannabis use to:

- ⚠ Anxiety
- ⚠ Delirium
- ⚠ Psychosis
- ⚠ Suicide risk

## Have the Discussion

It is important to ask about cannabis use with every patient and talk about the risks. It can save lives. Here are questions to consider for the discussion:

- ? Do you plan your day around cannabis use?
- ? Is your friend group or social group made up of mostly cannabis users?
- ? Have you thought about cutting back on your cannabis use, but found it hard to do?
- ? Do you find yourself losing control when you use cannabis?
- ? Are you having trouble with work, school or family because of your cannabis use?



**Resources**



[Marijuana and Lung Health](#)



[What You Need to Know About Marijuana Use and Driving](#)



The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE

[Cannabis-Related Disorders and Toxic Effects](#)



[Cannabis-Involved Traffic Injury Emergency Department Visits After Cannabis Legalization and Commercialization](#)



[Cannabis Use Increases Heart Attack and Stroke Risk](#)

**Options for your patients**

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Motivational Therapies
- Psychotherapy/Counseling



[Marijuana Anonymous](#)



[Using Marijuana Safely](#)



[How to Tell If Your Child Is Vaping](#)



[Cannabis DrugFacts](#)

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