



**CLARITY ON CANNABIS:**  
**Cannabis 101**

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**First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group**







# Everyone has a different level of comfort with the unknown...



# What is cannabis?

# What is cannabis?

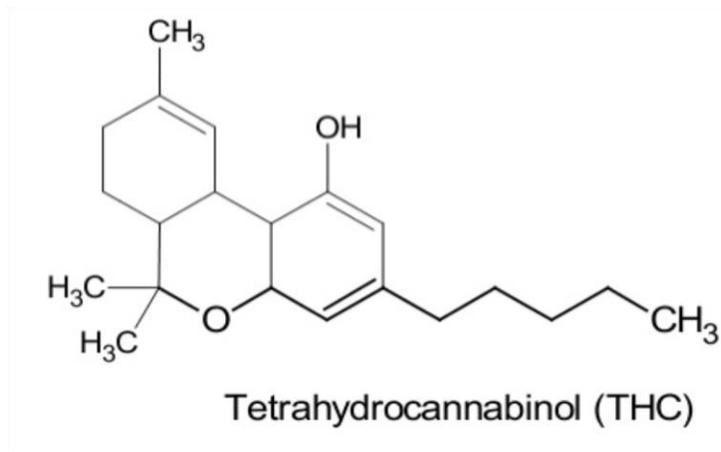
- Cannabis is a plant
- Can be used in a variety of forms (smoked, vaporized, eaten, capsules or liquid, topically)



gonj bubonic-chronic chiefs choke gange  
pakaloco limbo dank Mota green  
Dutchie wacky-tobaccy bomb shake purp kind-bud kief Nibpato  
hog-leg dolja spliff Mr. Jla-la reggs reefer MJ  
crippy ganje weed clickem candle doja  
doob joint cronick cheeba bammer drat fatty  
chief dope herb bud jib tical indo  
Cali buddha BC ganja  
boo burger bone blunt  
colitas 420 doobie skater dube  
chino bud Paca-lolo chiba erve

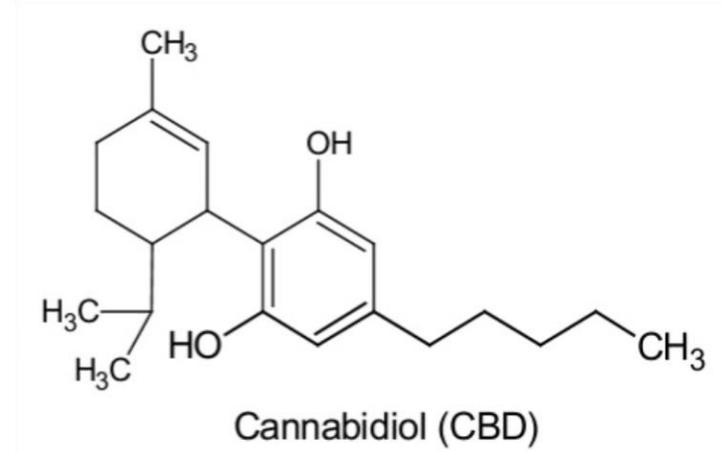
# THC

Psychotropic; gives the feeling of being 'high'. Some may feel anxious or paranoid.



# CBD

Little to no psychotropic properties; may reduce feelings of anxiety. Being studied for medical purposes.



# How is cannabis used?



Inhalation



Ingestion



Absorption

# Inhalation

Handheld pipe



Rolling papers



Handheld vaporizer



Water pipe (bong)



Hookah



Vapourizer



# Ingestion

Beverages



Candies



Oil



Chocolate



Hard Candy



Tincture



# Absorption

Body cream



Bath soak



Pleasure oil



Night cream



Salve

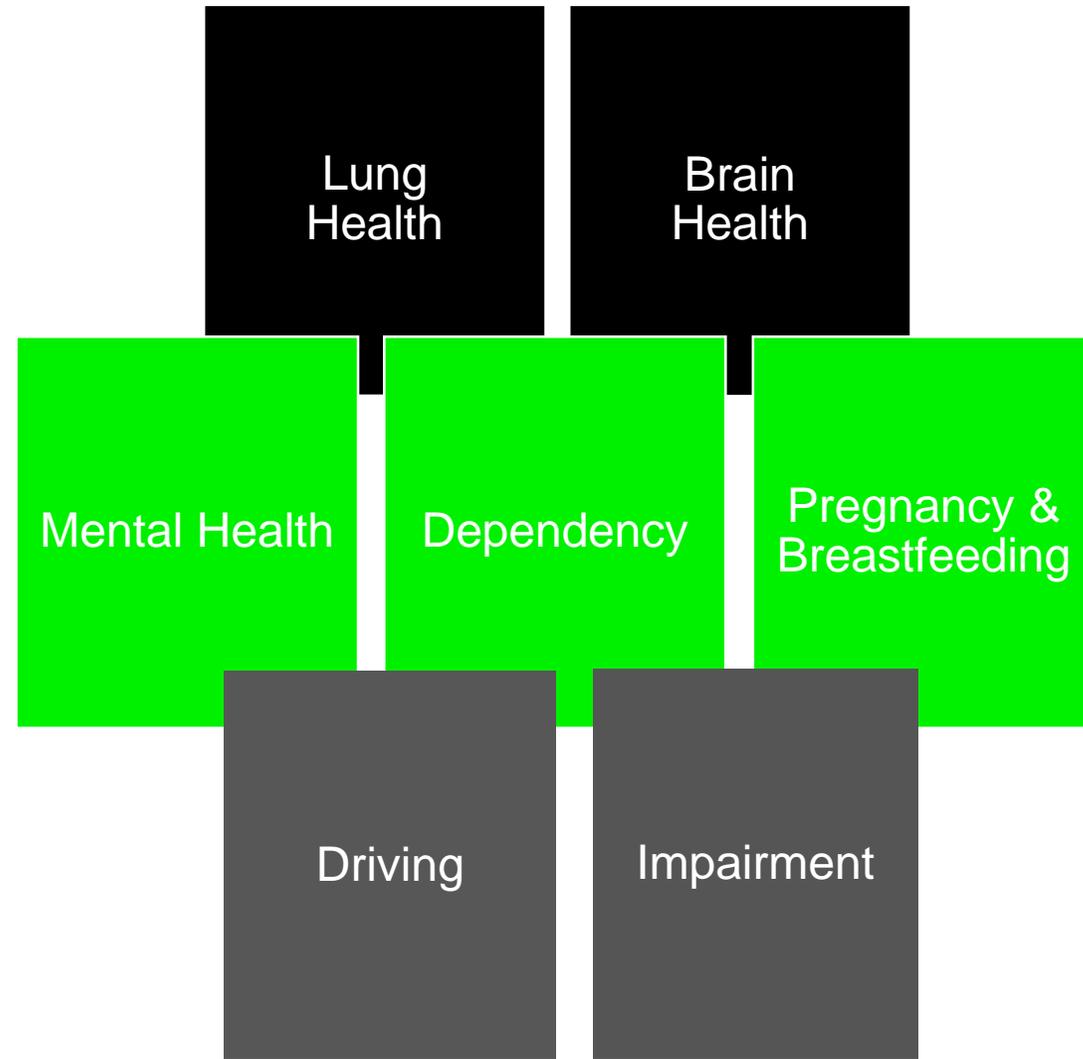


Shampoo

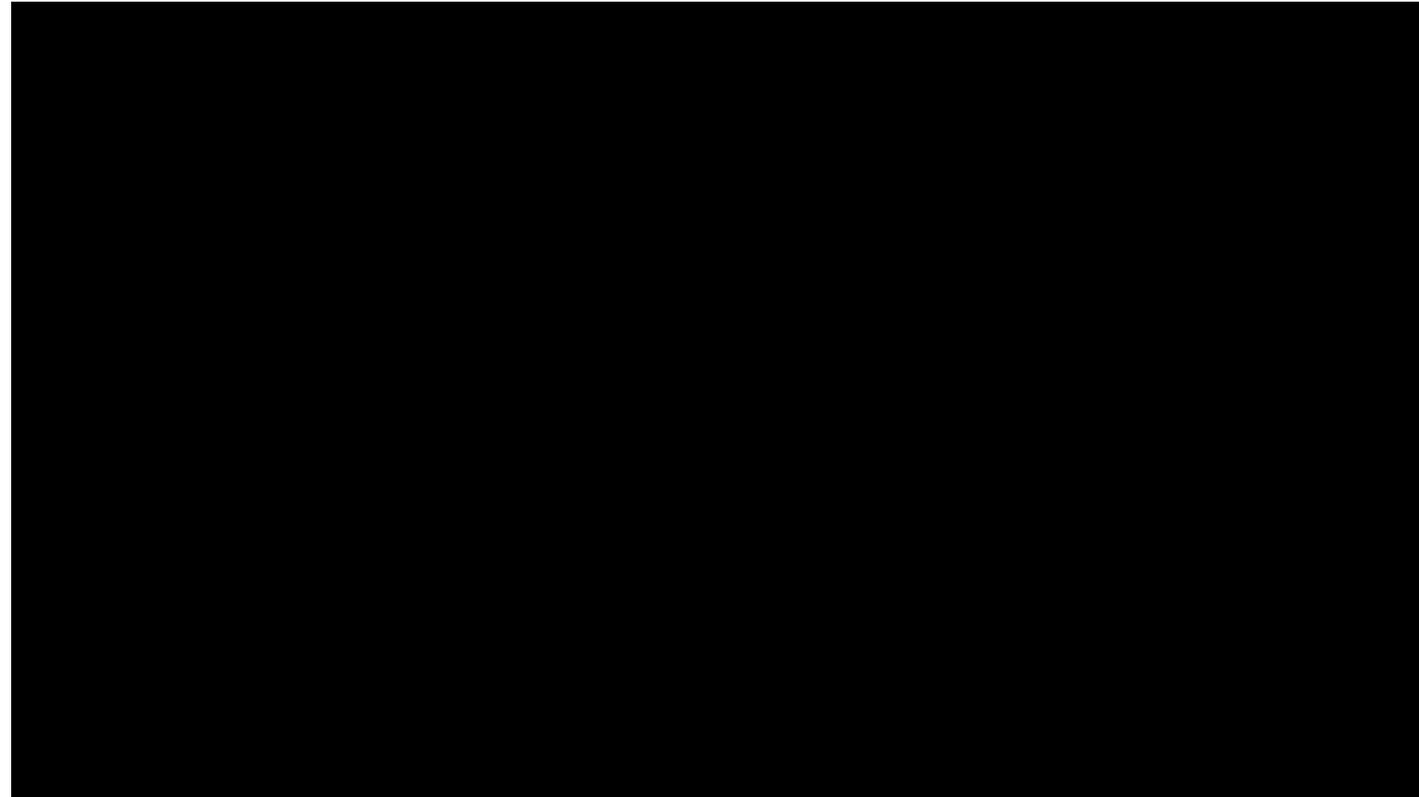


# How does cannabis make you feel?

- Time-distortion
- May experience feelings of calm/relaxation
-  Appetite and heart rate
- Cognitive impairment
- You may say or do things you wouldn't normally
- Heightened senses
- Followed by depressant period
- May experience anxiety or paranoia

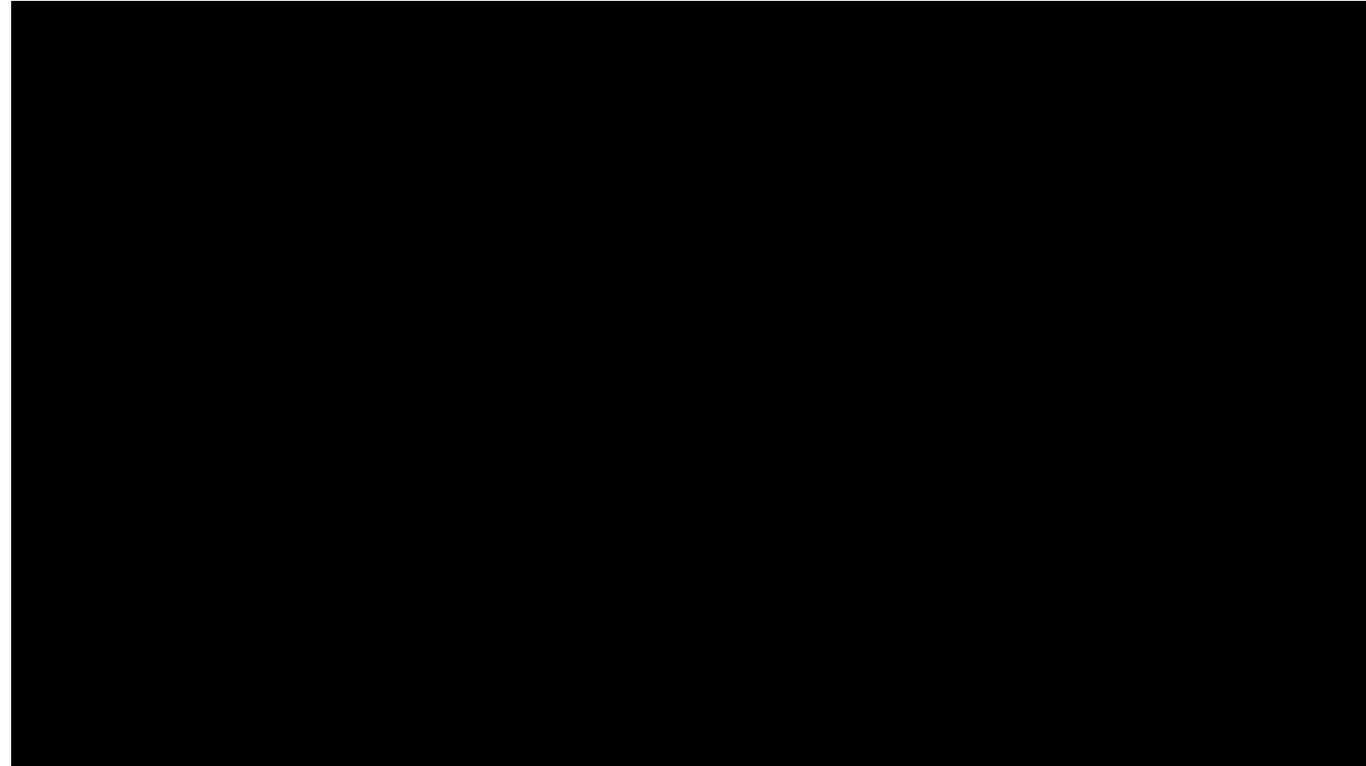


# Cannabis Use in Youth - video



Youth Specific Effects of Early Cannabis Use (1:48) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqe1h3ErQCA>

# Cannabis and the Developing Brain - video



Effects of cannabis on the teenage brain NCPIC + Turning Point (4:30)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvszaF4vcNY>

# Cannabis and The Developing Brain

- Cannabis can affect your attention, judgment, decision making and ability to learn
- 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

# What about cannabis use and mental health?



- For some people who use cannabis, frequent use may increase your risk for mood disorders like depression or anxiety
- If anyone in your family has mental health problems or substance use disorder, it is a good idea to avoid using cannabis

# Can you overdose on cannabis?

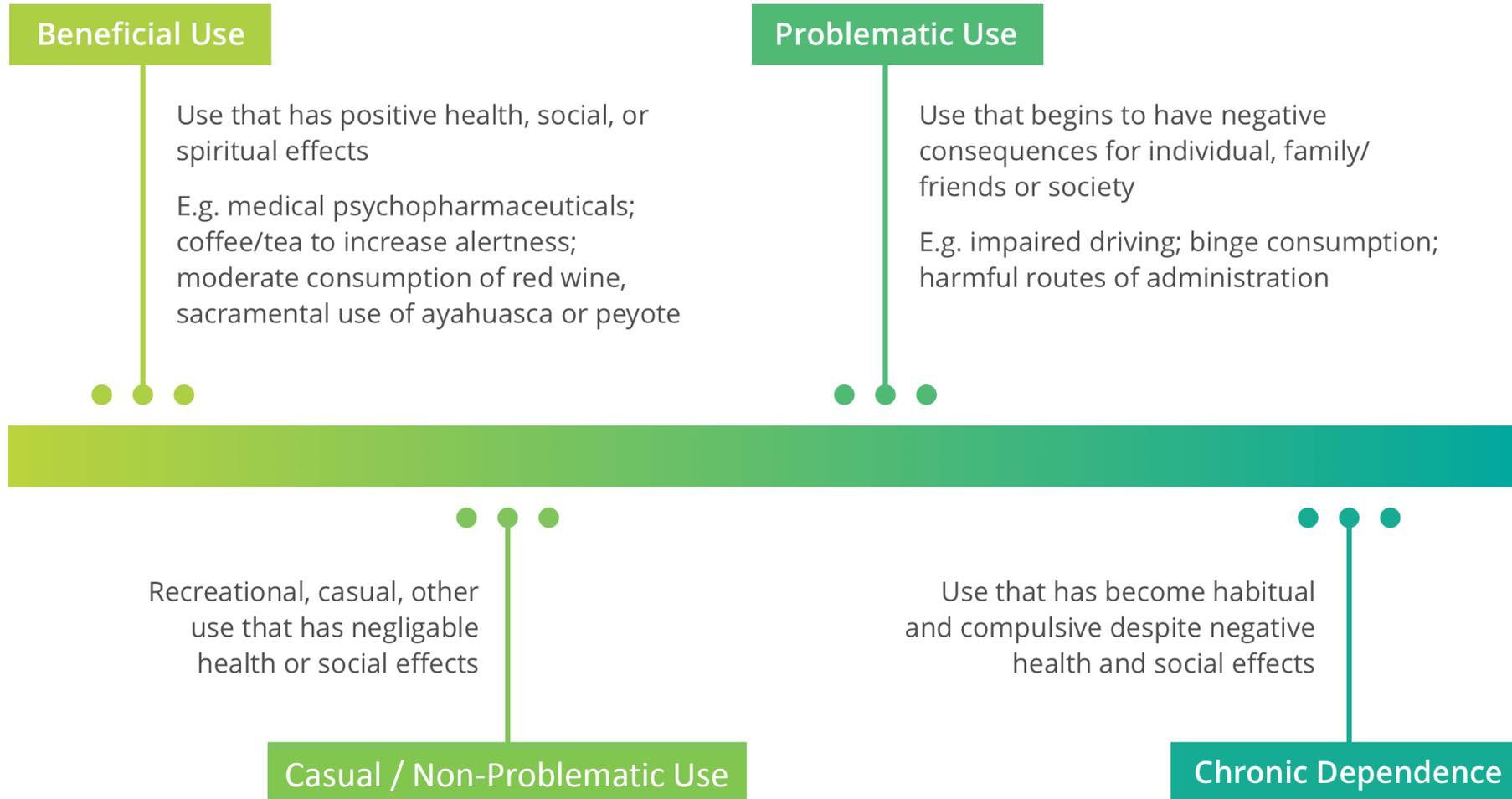
- Consuming too much cannabis can cause toxic effects
- If cannabis is combined with other drugs, the risk can increase
- Signs of cannabis poisoning include changes in heart rate, extreme nausea/vomiting, anxiety, extreme confusion, panic attacks or paranoia and seizures

# Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS)

- Severe and sudden nausea and vomiting
- Can lead to dehydration and kidney failure
- Associated with frequent, long term use
- Most effective treatment is to stop cannabis use



# Does cannabis use cause dependence?



Adapted from graphic presented in *A Public Health Approach to Drug Control in Canada*, Health Officers of British Columbia (2005)

Wild., C. & Haines-Saah, R. (2017). The Canadian context for cannabis policy and public health approaches to substance use. The O'Brien Institute for Public Health: Cannabis Legalization in Alberta Forum. <https://obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/files/iph/wild.pdf>

# Evidence-Based Health Effects of Cannabis

**More evidence is needed to understand the association between cannabis consumption and health risks and harms...**

**But that does not mean  
cannabis is harmless.**



## Key Research

- *The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids: The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, Medicine*
- *Cannabis Evidence Series: The Health Technology Assessment Unit, University of Calgary*

# The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids:

**The Current State of Evidence and Recommendations for Research (2017)**



## Substantial (not conclusive)

- Development of schizophrenia & other psychoses in those with genetic or biological liability
- Increased risk of motor vehicle crashes
- Low birth weight of offspring
- Respiratory symptoms with long term use
- Problematic use patterns and cannabis use disorder with early onset and/or heavy use
- Increased likelihood of use in males and those who use tobacco

# Health Effects

## No evidence of harm

- Overall health effects: arteritis
- Cancer: lung, head, and neck cancers

## Inconclusive

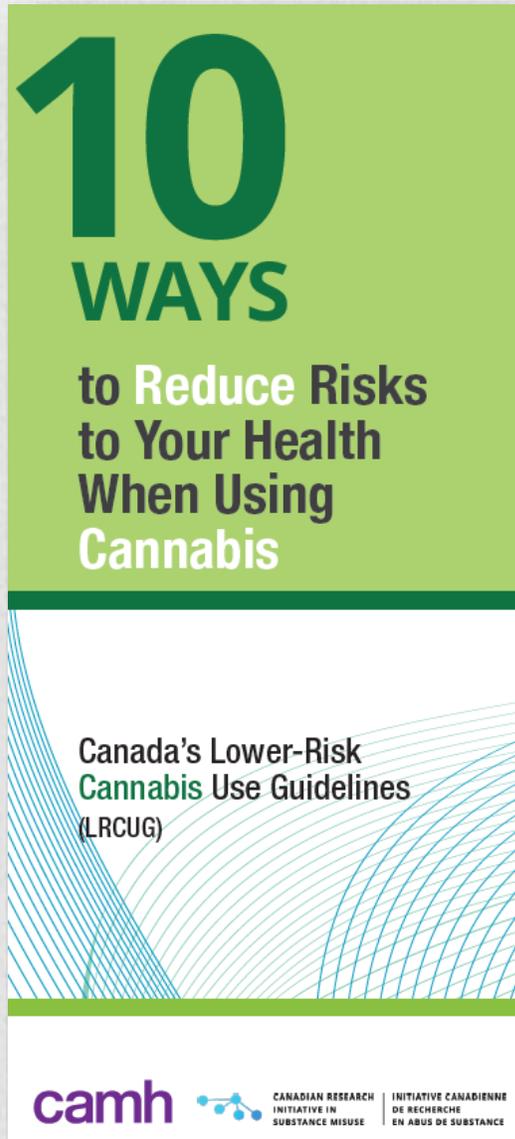
- Overall health effects: all cause mortality, atrial fibrillation, bone loss
- Mental health: psychosis in high-risk individuals, worse psychotic symptoms, suicide, depression, anxiety
- Cancer: bladder, prostate, penile, cervical, childhood cancers
- Brain changes: white matter, blood flow changes

## Evidence of harm

- Overall: driving, stroke, pulmonary function, cross-interaction with drugs, vision
- Mental health: psychosis, mania, neurological soft signs, relapse, dependency
- Cancer: testicular cancer
- Social effects: impaired driving
- Brain changes: decreased glutamate, changes in dopamine, poorer global functioning
- Neurocognitive changes: reduced memory, decreased efficiency
- Harms associated with use during pregnancy

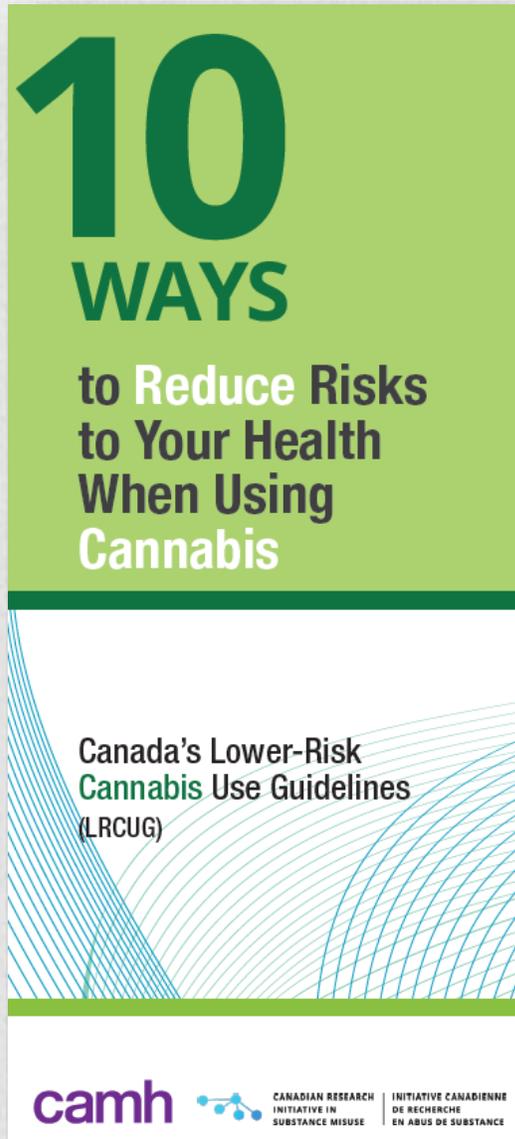
# Cannabis & Harm Reduction

# Reducing Health Risks Related to Cannabis Use



## Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

- 1) The only way to completely avoid these risks is by choosing not to use cannabis
- 2) You'll lower your risk of cannabis-related health problems if you choose to start using cannabis later in life
- 3) If you use, choose low-strength products, such as those with a lower THC content or a higher ratio of CBD to THC

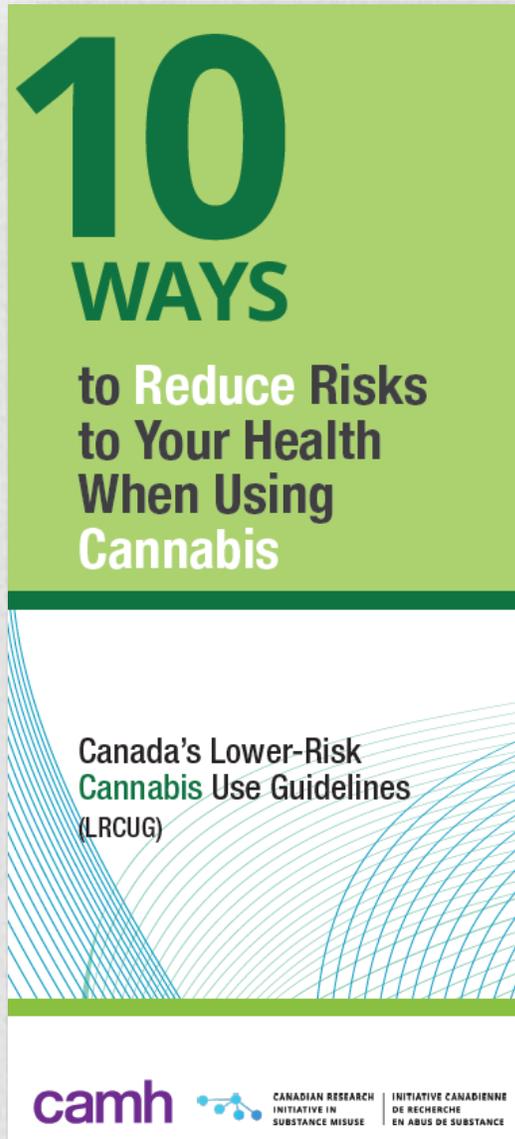


## Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

4) Don't use synthetic cannabis products

5) Smoking cannabis (for example, smoking a joint) is the most harmful way of using cannabis because it directly affects your lungs

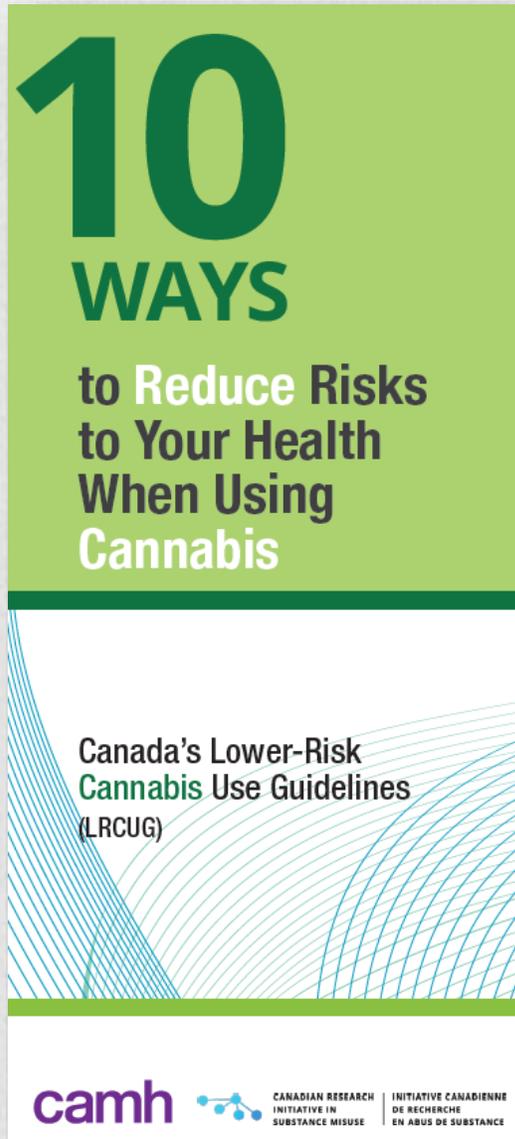
6) If you choose to smoke cannabis, avoid inhaling deeply or holding your breath



## Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

**7) Try to limit your use as much as possible**

**8) Cannabis use impairs your ability to drive a car or operate other machinery. Don't engage in these activities after using cannabis, or while you still feel affected by cannabis in any way.**



## Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

9) Specifically, people with a personal or family history of psychosis or substance use problems, and pregnant women should not use cannabis at all

10) Avoid combining any of the risky behaviours described above

## the Blunt Truth

Useful tips about safer ways  
to use cannabis



This resource has been developed for youth by youth.  
We did the boring research so you don't have to! (You're welcome.)

**You have the choice** whether you want to use cannabis\* (weed, pot), but you should know that **there are different ways of using and some are safer than others**. This resource gets down to **the blunt truth** about cannabis, and lets you know what science recommends to help reduce some of the risks to your health and well-being if you do choose to use cannabis.



\* See back for definitions

# The Blunt Truth: Useful tips about safer ways to use cannabis

- Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines
  - Developed by Youth For Youth

# Cannabis & Seniors/Older Adults

- Few studies have addressed how cannabis affects older adults
- Possible interactions with other medications
- May be more sensitive or susceptible to experiencing adverse effects<sup>1</sup>
- Drowsiness and dizziness caused by cannabis could contribute to instability and falling<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Health Canada (2013)

<sup>2</sup> CRNCC (2018)

# Cannabis & Safety

- Do not smoke or vapourize cannabis in the home or around children.
- Do not use cannabis when children are present. Using cannabis may reduce your ability to make decisions, respond to your children's needs, or react in an emergency.
- Do not prepare or consume edible cannabis products when children are present. These products may be mistaken for regular food or drinks.
- Keep cannabis and all drugs (including alcohol, tobacco and tobacco-like products) in their original containers and make sure they are clearly labelled. Keep all drugs locked up, out of sight and out of reach of children and pets.

If a child is exposed to cannabis, 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).

# Alberta's Approach to Non-Medical Cannabis

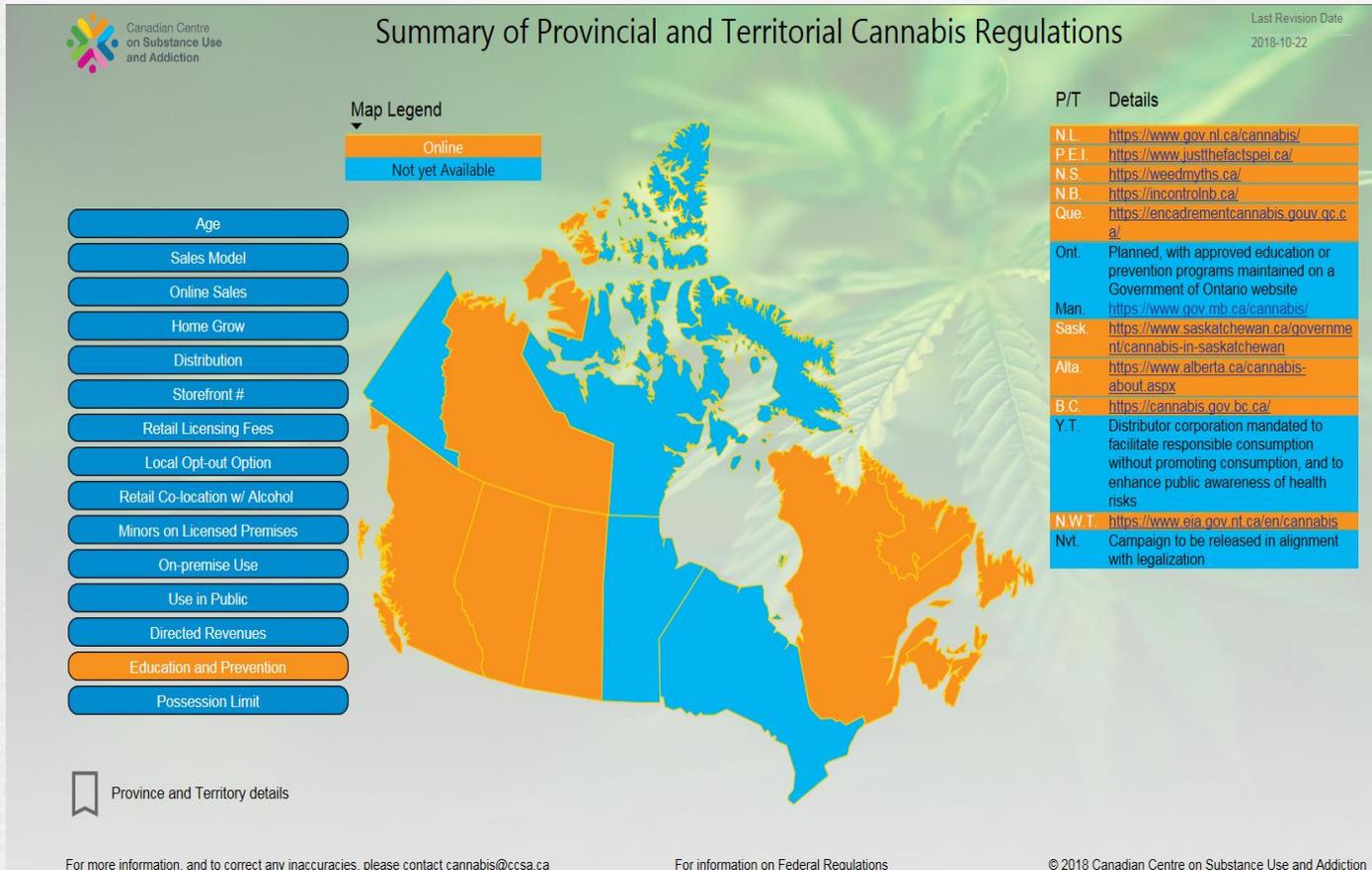
# Why legalize cannabis?

**Restrict**  
youth access

**Displace**  
the illegal market

**Protect**  
public health

Minimum age	Safeguards for sales (AGLC)	Buying cannabis (storefront & online)
Public consumption	Growing cannabis (indoor & outdoor)	Possessing cannabis
Drug-impaired driving	Impairment in workplaces	Advertising and packaging



# Summary of Regulation Map

- Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNTMyMDYzNTUtYzVmNy00MjFmLWEzNTQtNzBjZlWQ0MTMyNzFkIiwidCI6IjJkYzk5ZWJkLTAyYjEtNDk0NS04NDNhLTgxZjkwZGVkYWU4NyJ9>

# What does legal cannabis mean for youth?

# Why legalize cannabis?

**Restrict**  
youth access

**Displace**  
the illegal market

**Protect**  
public health

# Yes, cannabis is legal in Alberta but...

(as of October 17, 2018)

- ✓ Only if you're 18+
- ✓ Only from licensed stores or [albertacannabis.org](http://albertacannabis.org)
- ✓ 30 grams is the most you can buy or carry at a time (adults)
- ✓ Only 4 plants can be grown per household
- × You can't smoke in public places used by children and youth
- × Kids can't enter cannabis stores, even with an adult
- × Edibles are not yet legal to sell
- × Driving high is illegal - it can't be within reach of *anyone* in a vehicle

- Youth who possess **more than 5 grams** may be subject to criminal charges
- Youth who possess **5 grams or less** will not be subject to criminal charges



30-day license  
suspension



7-day vehicle  
seizure



Must remain in  
GDL program for  
2 years



Criminal  
penalties still  
apply

## Zero Tolerance Program

Drivers under the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program found to have any amount of cannabis or illegal drugs in their blood are now subject to the same provincial sanctions that apply to alcohol.

# AMA Impaired Driving Resources



## THE HIGH ROAD

Let's bust some misconceptions about cannabis and road safety.

The truth is, the drug impairs:

REACTION TIME

ATTENTION SPAN

COORDINATION

DECISION-MAKING

Virtually everything required to safely operate a vehicle.



<https://ama.ab.ca/drivehighdui>

### Driving High is a DUI



Want to know more about Cannabis and Driving in Alberta? [Click here](#)

### Have The Talk



### Make The Call



### TAKE OUR QUIZ



### WHEN YOU'RE HIGH





## Pot and Driving

- Informed by youth focus groups and key informants
- Guide to facilitate conversation and education regarding cannabis impaired driving
- Designed as '10 questions for teenagers'
- Resources include discussion guide, shortened 10 questions document, posters and an FAQ document

<https://cpha.ca/pot-driving>

# How many youth use cannabis?

## In 2016-17:

- 16% of Alberta students in grade 7-12 reported using cannabis in the past year.
- **That means 84% of students made the choice to not use cannabis.**

# **Will youth consumption rates increase because of legalization?**

- We cannot fully anticipate the impact of legalization on youth consumption.
- Youth consumption rates have remained stable in Colorado and Washington.
- The protection of young people has been a key factor in the development of Federal and Provincial cannabis regulations.

# What Canadian Youth Think About Cannabis

## Influences for Using or Not Using Cannabis

- “everyone smokes weed”
- concerns about poor academic performance, negative impacts on family relationships and health risks
- parents, siblings and friends are an important influence

## Perceived Positive and Negative Effects

- more positive effects than negative effects
- affect each person differently
- negative effects due to the individual, not cannabis itself

# What Canadian Youth Think About Cannabis

## Cannabis as Natural and Safe (not a drug)

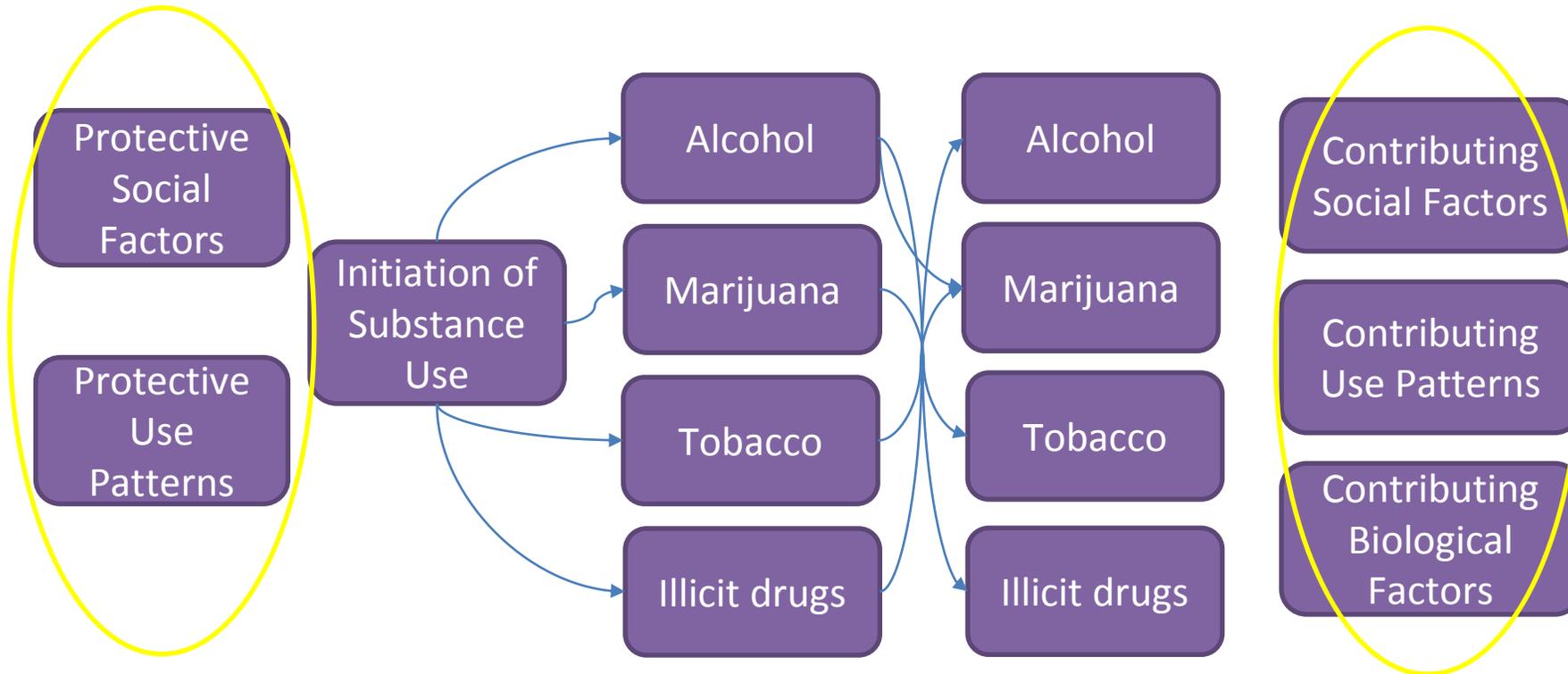
- not a drug, it's natural (not man-made)
- safe and non-addictive, unlike “harder” drugs
- viewed as safer than alcohol and tobacco

## Cannabis and Driving

- think it makes people better drivers by increasing their focus
- not as dangerous as drunk driving

*Talking is important - perceptions and misperceptions could impact youth behaviour*

# The Gateway Myth



- Focus on preventing & delaying use
- Reduce frequency of use for those who consume

# Risk Factors



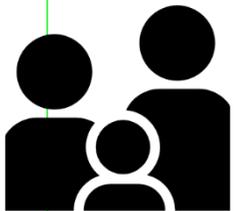
## Individual

- Early initiation of substance use
- Difficult temperament
- Mental illness
- Impulsivity
- Lack of social skills



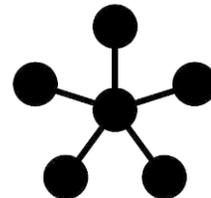
## School

- Poor academic achievement
- Disconnection
- Peer attitude toward substance use favorable
- Peer rejection



## Family

- Parental or sibling substance use
- Discord, violence
- Low parental support and monitoring



## Community

- Availability/Accessibility
- High transience
- Poverty
- High crime rates

# Protective Factors



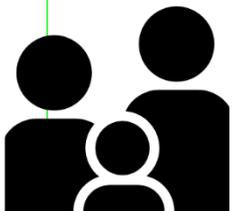
## Individual

- Social skills
- Positive self-esteem
- Problem-solving and coping skills
- Ability to self-regulate emotions



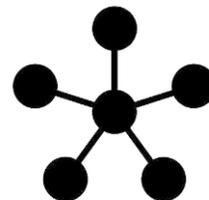
## School

- Participation in pro-social activities
- School engagement/connection
- Positive peer behavior/norms



## Family

- Emotional support
- Consistent monitoring and discipline
- Clear expectations for behavior



## Community

- Connected to adults outside the family
- Opportunities for engagement
- Physical and psychological safety

# Tips for educating youth

- Evidence-based information
- Conversations about cannabis, early and often (in age-appropriate ways)
- Non-judgmental, open dialogue that uses interactive approaches
- Meaningful inclusion (youth voice)
- Harm reduction messages
- Tailoring to local context
- Attention to overlapping issues of racism, social justice and stigma
- Delivery by trained facilitators and peer mentors
- Supporting parent-child communication

# Language matters!

## Don't use:

- Being clean
- Drug abuse
- Addicts
- Stoners, potheads, etc.

## Instead, try:

- Drug use
- People who use cannabis
- People with substance use disorder

# Additional Resources

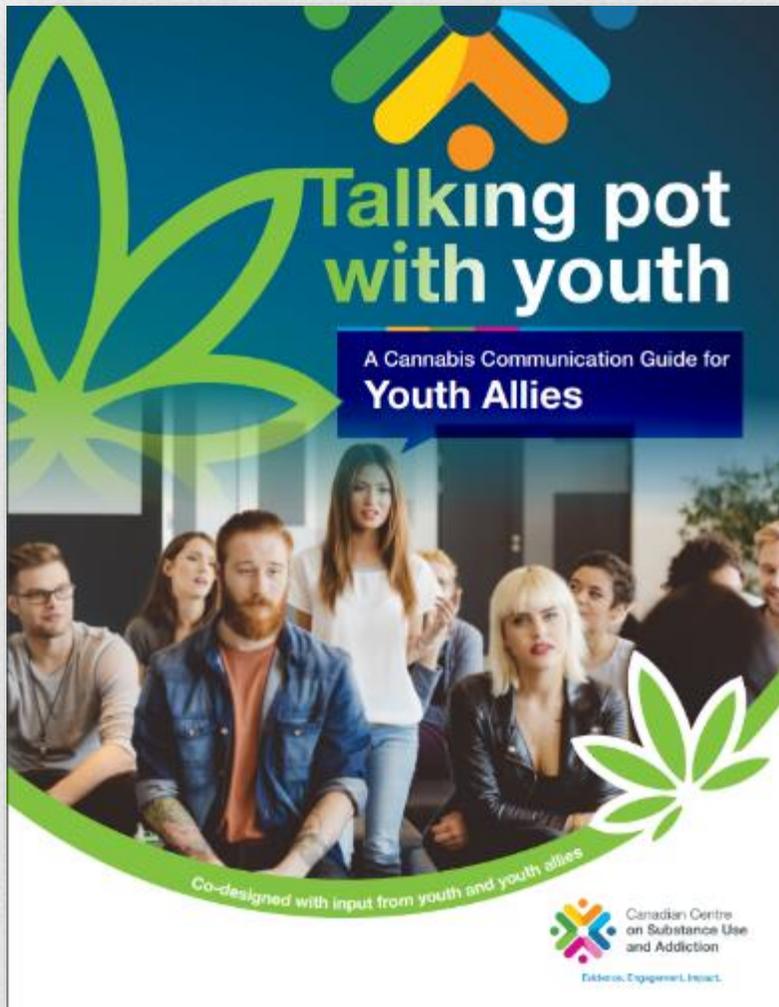
# Cannabis Talk Kit

- Provides an overview of basic cannabis information
- A practical guide for talking to youth about cannabis
- Gives examples of language to use and language to avoid
- Describes signs to watch for if you suspect there is a problem



# Talking Pot with Youth

- Takes a harm reduction approach
- Helps youth allies have safe, unbiased, informed and non-judgmental conversations
- Contains a **self-assessment exercise** to determine potential biases and tips for setting them aside
- Provides principles for supportive communication



# Augmented Reality Posters (Gov't of NWT)





# Non-medical cannabis information

First Nations Health Authority

<http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use/non-medical-cannabis-information>

Information for...



Parents



Youth and young adults



Health care professionals



Pregnant or breastfeeding individuals



Teachers and educators



Indigenous peoples and communities

# Cannabis Resources for Indigenous Peoples and Communities

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/resources.html?indigenous-peoples-communities>

# Information about the Cannabis Act

- Cannabis Act: Here's what you need to know
  - Several language options including:
    - Inuktitut
    - Ojibwe
    - Plains Cree
    - Swampy Cree
  - PDF post card format also available

# Health Canada Funding

- **Substance Use and Addictions Program**
  - **Call for Proposals July 2019**
  - One-time anticipatory call for proposals, now open.
  - The deadline for submission is **Thursday, September 26, 2019, at 1:00 pm Eastern Time.**
  - To enhance the response to the opioid crisis and other emerging issues, such as methamphetamines.
    - three streams: (1) harm reduction, community-led and front-line initiatives; (2) increasing access to pharmaceutical-grade medications; and (3) new approaches to address problematic methamphetamine use.

# If you are concerned about your own or someone else's use: of cannabis, alcohol, or another drug:

- Talk to someone you trust
- Youth looking for help can contact **Kids Help Phone:**  
1-800-668-6868 [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)
- Hope for Wellness Helpline:  
1-855-242-3310  
  
Online chat: [hopeforwellness.ca](http://hopeforwellness.ca)
- **Addiction Helpline** (Alberta Health Services)  
1-866-332-2322
- **Health Link** - call 811
- [Drugsafe.ca](http://Drugsafe.ca)



**DrugSafe**

**Cannabis**

[michelle.fry@ahs.ca](mailto:michelle.fry@ahs.ca)

[kelsey.walper@ahs.ca](mailto:kelsey.walper@ahs.ca)

[wayne.labonte@ahs.ca](mailto:wayne.labonte@ahs.ca)

**drugsafe.ca**