

Cannabis – What Albertans Need to Know



Cannabis is a psychoactive drug, derived from the cannabis sativa plant, that will be legalized for use October 2018.

Cannabis has 2 major chemical components -- tetrahydrocannabinol (**THC**) & cannabidiol (**CBD**). **THC**, the major psychoactive chemical in cannabis, can increase risk of depression, anxiety, & psychosis. **CBD** does not have mind altering effects, & has been used to treat pain, seizures, nausea, & muscle spasms.

Effects of Cannabis

Psychological – memory, emotional control, attention, learning, decision making, & self-control. Heavy use increases depression & bipolar risks

Physiological -- increased heart rate, dry mouth, reddening of eyes, & muscle relaxation

Medical – reduces spasticity associated with MS, pain control, anti-inflammatory effects, & appetite improvement

Is Cannabis Addictive?

Yes! Though it is less addictive than nicotine or alcohol, with heavy use, individuals still may experience withdrawal, increased tolerance, & dependence.

Who is Vulnerable?

Individuals who are more vulnerable to cannabis use include... pregnant women, those under 25, impulsive individuals, those with psychiatric disorders, those with cardiovascular problems, males (more likely to become dependent), & those with a history of psychosis.

Heavy cannabis use in individuals under 25 has been linked to negative life outcomes & decreased cognitive functioning.

Psychological Treatment Options

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Learn to identify & correct problematic behaviours by applying a range of different skills that can be used to stop cannabis abuse.

Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) Evokes motivated change while addressing any hesitation toward treatment & recovery.

Contingency Management An example of this would be giving the patient rewards, to reinforce their positive behaviours.

More Information/Sources:

The Centre for Addiction & Mental Health – provides information about use & abuse of cannabis:

http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/marijuana/Pages/about_marijuana.aspx

Information regarding the research & recommendations for the legalization of cannabis in Canada:

http://cpa.ca/docs/File/Position/Position_Paper_Recommendations_for_the_Legalization_of_Cannabis_in_Canada-September_2017.pdf

Canadian Psychological Association: https://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PsychologyWorksFactSheet_CannabisUse.pdf

https://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Position/Position_Paper_Recommendations_for_the_Legalization_of_Cannabis_in_Canada-September_2017.pdf

American Psychological Association:

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/11/marijuana-brain.aspx>