

## **Cannabis Use What Albertans Need to Know**

Cannabis is a psychoactive drug, derived from the cannabis sativa plant, legalized for use by adults since 2018 in addition to medical/therapeutic use. Cannabis has 2 major chemical components -- tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). THC, the major psychoactive chemical in cannabis, can increase risk of depression, anxiety, and psychosis. CBD does not have mind-altering effects. CBD has been used to treat pain, seizures, nausea, and muscle spasms.

### **Effects of Cannabis Use**

Different people have different experiences with cannabis use. Some may feel relaxed, talkative, and euphoric, while others may feel confused or anxious after use. There are some physical effects of cannabis too. These include redness in the eyes, increase in heart rate, dry mouth, loss of balance and decrease in blood pressure. The therapeutic uses of cannabis help regulate nausea in chemotherapy patients, appetite, pain and depressed mood and insomnia.

### **Is Cannabis Addictive?**

Yes. Although it is less addictive than nicotine or alcohol, with heavy use, individuals still may experience withdrawal, increased tolerance, and dependence. Those who develop psychological dependence may feel anxious without use.

If used regularly for a long period, individuals could develop physical dependence which causes mild withdrawal symptoms if they stop using it. These symptoms can include anxiety, upset stomach, sweating, loss of appetite and disturbed sleep.

### **Who is Vulnerable?**

Individuals who are more vulnerable include pregnant women, those under 25, impulsive individuals, those with psychiatric disorders, those with cardiovascular problems, and those with a history of psychosis. Males are more likely to become dependent and females are more likely to develop tolerance. Heavy cannabis use in individuals under 25 has been linked to negative life outcomes and decreased cognitive functioning.

### **Treatments that Work**

#### **Psychotherapy**

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) helps individuals identify and correct problematic behaviours by applying a range of different skills that can be used to stop excessive cannabis use.

Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) evokes motivated change while addressing hesitation toward treatment and recovery.

Contingency Management includes giving the patient rewards to reinforce their positive behaviours.

**Resources** – [Self-help strategies for cutting down or stopping substance use: A guide](#), WHO  
[10 ways to reduce risks to your health when using Cannabis](#), CAMH

**References** – Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, [Cannabis](#)