

Cannabis

Cannabis for non-medical use is legal in Canada as of October 17, 2018.

There are many different views on cannabis. Some may find the transition to legalized cannabis in British Columbia challenging. There are some facts you should know that will help keep British Columbians safe. For information from the Government of British Columbia on cannabis legislation, regulations, impacts on travel, growing at home and more visit [Get Cannabis Clarity](#).

Cannabis can be used for medical or non-medical purposes. People may choose to use cannabis for its therapeutic effects. But it can also harm your health. Cannabis for medical purposes has been legal in Canada for several years.

Learn how cannabis can impact the health of you and your family.

- [Cannabis and Your Health](#)
- [Medical Cannabis](#)

What is Cannabis?

Cannabis is also known as marijuana, pot or weed. The cannabis plant contains many chemical compounds, including cannabinoids. These chemicals may affect the brain and other parts of the body's nervous system. THC and CBD are the most well-known cannabinoids.

For more information about the cannabis plant and its components:

- [About cannabis, Health Canada](#)
- [Cannabis: An Introduction, BC Cannabis Stores](#)
- [Cannabis, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)
- [Cannabis, Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#)
- [Cannabis Updates, BC Liquor Distribution Branch](#)
- [Cannabis: Important things to know, Kids Help Phone](#)

Safer and Responsible Use

Cannabis affects everyone in different ways. Understanding the health risks and potential benefits of cannabis and guidelines for safer use can help you make decisions that are right for you.

[Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#) provide 10 recommendations on safer cannabis use, if you choose to use cannabis. These recommendations focus on non-medical use of cannabis but should also be considered if you use cannabis for medical purposes.

1. Choose not to use cannabis at all if you want to completely avoid related risks
2. If you are young, avoid cannabis until later in life. Young people have higher cannabis-related health risks
3. Choose low-strength products such as those with low THC content or a higher CBD to THC ratio

4. Do not use synthetic cannabis products
5. Do not smoke cannabis. It is the most harmful way of using cannabis
6. If you do smoke cannabis, avoid inhaling deeply and do not hold your breath
7. Limit your use. Use cannabis only occasionally to reduce your health risks
8. Do not drive or operate machinery after using cannabis
9. Avoid any use of cannabis if you have a personal or family history of psychosis, substance use, are pregnant or are breastfeeding
10. Do not combine cannabis with other high risk behaviours, such as consuming alcohol or other drugs

Using cannabis during pregnancy may affect your baby. For information about the health risks of using cannabis before or during pregnancy:

- [Pregnancy Info, The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada](#)
- [Thinking about using cannabis before or during pregnancy?, Government of Canada](#)
- [Women and Cannabis, Centre of Excellence for Women's Health](#)

For more information about health risks and guidelines for safer use:

- [Cannabis: What Parents/Guardians and Caregivers Need to Know, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)
- [Health effects of cannabis, Government of Canada](#)
- [Thinking about using cannabis while parenting?, Government of Canada](#)

Talking About Substance Use with Your Family

Talking openly and honestly with your children and family about complex issues like substance use can help build positive connections and enhance resilience. Refer to our [Parenting Articles](#) for advice on having conversations with your family.

For more information and resources on how to talk to your family:

- [Blunt Truth, Useful tips about safer ways to use cannabis, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)
- [Cannabis Communication Guide, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#)
- [Cannabis IQ \(A Resource for Families\), Early Psychosis Intervention Ontario Network](#)
- [Tips for Talking With Your Teen, Drug Free Kids Canada](#)
- [Cannabis Use and Youth \(a parent's guide\), HeretoHelp](#)
- [Talking pot with youth, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#)
- [Talking with teenagers about drugs, Government of Canada](#)
- [Your Cannabis Questions, Answered, Government of Canada](#)

Cannabis for Medical Purposes

Cannabis can be used for medical purposes to help treat the symptoms of certain medical conditions. Cannabis for medical purposes has been legal in Canada for several years. The Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations have had minor changes with the introduction of legalized non-medical cannabis.

Our health topic on [Medical Cannabis](#) provides information on what medical cannabis is, what it is used for and how it is used. We also provide information on some of the risks of medical cannabis and how you can reduce your risk.

If you are suffering from a serious or debilitating illness, live in Canada and have a medical doctor's support, you can apply for [accessing cannabis for medical purposes from a licensed producer](#). To learn more, visit [Medical use of cannabis, Health Canada](#), call the Office of Medical Cannabis at 1-866-337-7705 or speak with your health care provider.

Laws and Regulations on the Use of Non-Medical Cannabis in British Columbia

Understanding the laws and regulations for non-medical cannabis in Canada and British Columbia will help British Columbians stay safe. New laws are in place to improve safety. For example, changes to the Motor Vehicle Act give police more tools to remove impaired drivers from the road. Visit [Get Cannabis Clarity](#) for information on the laws and regulations in British Columbia and Canada.

For more information about the laws and regulations:

- [Cannabis, BC Government, Public Safety](#)
- [Cannabis and international travel, Government of Canada](#)
- [Cannabis and the border, Government of Canada](#)
- [Cannabis impairment, Government of Canada](#)
- [Consumer Information – Cannabis, Government of Canada](#)
- [Don't Drive High, Government of Canada](#)
- [Substance use & impairment in the workplace, WorkSafeBC](#)
- [CBP Statement on Canada's Legalization of Marijuana and Crossing the Border, U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

Useful Resources

Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Services

Alcohol & Drug Information Referral Service (ADIRS) provides free, confidential information and referral services to British Columbians in need of support with any kind of substance use issue (alcohol or other drugs). Referral to community substance use treatment services is available for all ages.

Contact ADIRS toll-free at 1-800-663-1441, or in the lower mainland at 604-660-9382. Free, multilingual telephone help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

British Columbia Drug and Poison Information Centre

If you think someone might have been poisoned by any substance, medicine or chemical, call the [Poison Control Centre](#). The Poison Control line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 604-682-5050 or 1-800-567-8911 (toll-free in B.C.) Telephone interpreting is available in over 150 languages.

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

The [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#) provides evidence-based guidance to decision on substance use in Canada. Learn about discussing cannabis use, cannabis and youth, recent research on cannabis and more.

Crisis Line Association of BC

The Crisis Line Association of BC is the provincial association representing member crisis lines from across British Columbia. Call for emotional support, crisis and suicide assessment and intervention, and resource information.

- [1-800-SUICIDE \(1-800-784-2433\)](#): call if you are having thoughts of suicide, or know someone who is. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and in up to 140 languages. Operated in partnership with the Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of BC.
- [310-Mental Health \(310-6789\)](#): call if you need emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health in British Columbia. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is toll-free anywhere in British Columbia (no need to dial an area code).

Foundry

[Foundry](#) is a province-wide network of integrated health and social service centres for people ages 12-24. Foundry centres provide mental health care, substance use services, primary care, social services and youth and family peer supports. Visit a local [Foundry Centre](#).

HeretoHelp

[HeretoHelp](#) is a project of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. Seven leading mental health and addictions non-profit agencies work together to help people live well and better prevent and manage mental health and substance use problems.

- [Cannabis Use and Youth \(a parent's guide\)](#)
- [Learn About Cannabis](#)
- [Safer Cannabis Use: Marijuana, hash, hash oil](#)

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

[Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#) provides mental health and substance use information, resources, help navigating the mental health system and peer support to children, youth and their families from across British Columbia.

Contact the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre by phone at 1-800-665-1822, in person at BC Children's Hospital (Mental Health Building, 4555 Heather Street, Vancouver, BC, Room P3-302 (3rd Floor)) or by email at kellycentre@cw.bc.ca.

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For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.