



California Cannabis Health Information Initiative

## Responsible Use of Cannabis

Consuming cannabis (marijuana, weed, pot, etc.) can be risky, depending on how you use and what you do afterward. Here is important information to help you avoid harming yourself and others.



### Be Safe

- Driving under the influence of cannabis is illegal and increases your risk of getting into a car crash.<sup>1,2</sup>
- If you smoke or vape cannabis you may feel the effects right away, but it can take between 30 minutes and two hours to feel the effects of edibles. Edibles may have higher concentrations of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC, the active ingredient in cannabis). If you eat too much too fast, you are at higher risk for poisoning.<sup>3</sup>
- Smoke from cannabis contains many of the same toxins and chemicals found in tobacco smoke and inhaling it can increase your risk of developing lung problems.<sup>4,5</sup>
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or plan to become pregnant soon, leading doctors' organizations recommend that you do not use cannabis.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Young people who use cannabis regularly can harm their memory and ability to learn. There is also a greater risk for depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia.<sup>8,9,10,11</sup>

- Even though it is legal under California law, employers can prohibit the use of cannabis by employees. Know your workplace cannabis policies.<sup>12</sup>
- Protect your pets. Store cannabis safely out of reach of dogs, cats, and other animals. If you think your pet may have eaten cannabis, call your veterinarian.<sup>13</sup>

### Keep Children Safe

Cannabis affects children more strongly than adults. Children are at higher risk for poisoning from cannabis, especially with edibles.<sup>14</sup> Here are some safe practices you need to know.

- Store all cannabis products in a locked area. Make sure children cannot see or reach the locked area. Keep cannabis in the child-resistant packaging from the store.
- Never use cannabis around children.
  - When you are using cannabis, make sure an adult who can look after your children is nearby.
- Secondhand cannabis smoke contains THC and other chemicals that can affect the health of children.<sup>15,16</sup>
- If you think a child may have ingested cannabis, call the local Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222. If you think a child needs immediate medical help, call 911.



## High THC Levels

- The way cannabis plants are grown has changed over the past few decades. Many plants now contain higher amounts of THC. The higher the THC content, the stronger the effects on your brain and behavior.<sup>17,18,19</sup>
- Higher levels of THC may result from newer methods of using cannabis like dabbing, vaping, and/or consuming edibles.<sup>19</sup>
- High concentrations of THC are not fully understood, but can impair your judgement and coordination, and lead to poisonings, car crashes and other injuries. It can also increase your risk for acute psychosis.<sup>1,20,21,22</sup>

## Everyone Reacts Differently

- You may react differently to cannabis than other people, depending on which method you use, how strong the cannabis is, your gender and previous experience with cannabis or other drugs.<sup>23</sup>
- Start with less than a single dose (less than 10 mg of THC) then wait before you use more.<sup>24,25</sup>
  - Even a single dose of THC may impair your ability to drive, bike or do other activities, especially if you are a new cannabis user or just use once in a while.<sup>26,27</sup>

## Vaping and Concentrates

Researchers do not fully understand how using cannabis with vaporizers or using concentrated forms like waxes and oils affects your health. However, we do know:<sup>28</sup>

- Vaporized and concentrated cannabis can have a lot more THC, which increases the risk of poisoning.<sup>29</sup>
- The tools and high temperatures used for vaporizing cannabis may expose you to toxic substances.<sup>29</sup>




## Synthetic Cannabinoids

- Synthetic cannabinoids (K2, spice, spike) are not actually cannabis, but are made from another type of plant and sprayed with chemicals produced in a laboratory.<sup>27,30</sup>
- Synthetic cannabinoids affect your brain more powerfully than cannabis, and may result in nausea, anxiety, paranoia, brain swelling, seizures, hallucinations, aggression, heart palpitations or chest pains.<sup>31,32</sup>
- If someone you know has used synthetic cannabinoids and needs help, take the following steps:
  - Call 911 immediately if the person stops breathing, collapses, or has a seizure. These symptoms can be life-threatening and require immediate medical attention.
  - Call your Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222.

### LET'S TALK CANNABIS

 <http://bit.do/letstalkcannabis>

 [letstalkcannabis@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:letstalkcannabis@cdph.ca.gov)

Under California law, adults 21 or older can use, carry, and grow cannabis (marijuana, weed, pot, etc.). Buying cannabis (without a valid physician's recommendation or a county-issued medical marijuana identification card) will become legal under California law for adults 21 or older on January 1, 2018. Use of medicinal cannabis is legal under California law if you have a valid physician's recommendation or a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card. To buy medicinal cannabis, you must be 18 or older and have either a valid physician's recommendation, a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, or be a Primary Caregiver as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11362.7(d) or 11362.5(e), with a valid physician's recommendation for the patient. In addition, consistent with the Compassionate Use Act, you may possess or cultivate any amount that is reasonably related to your current medical needs. The new California law, known as the Medicinal and Adult-Use Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act<sup>33</sup>, includes information about where you can use cannabis, how much you can possess, and the penalties for illegal use. For more information, visit: [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=20170180SB94](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=20170180SB94).

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