

resources for youth who use CANNABIS



As of October 17, 2018, it will be legal for adults in Canada to use cannabis (pot, weed, marijuana) for non-medicinal or recreational purposes.

Ontario is rolling out a legalization plan rooted in a public health approach. This type of framework focuses on maintaining or improving population health by reducing health and social harms and risks. It is multi-faceted in nature and uses a range of strategies such as prevention, harm reduction and health promotion. A public health approach also prioritizes providing individuals with necessary information to help them in making knowledgeable and evidence-based decisions.

Ontario's legalization framework includes guidelines for working with youth. This focus is important. Canada has one of the highest cannabis use rates in the world. After alcohol, cannabis is the psychoactive most commonly used by youth. According to the 2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 1 in 5 youth between grades 7-12 said they used cannabis in the last year. Among 15-19-year-olds nationally, an estimated 23% say they use cannabis everyday. Cannabis use, like substance use in general, falls on a spectrum. It ranges from beneficial use to problem use. In the same vein, youth give many reasons for using cannabis. Regardless of motivations for use, adolescence is a crucial time for brain development. Cannabis use during this formative period can increase vulnerability to negative health outcomes (for example, psychosis). Additionally, cannabis use may increase vulnerability to social harms such as criminalization and marginalization, as a result of stigma directed towards people who use substances.

A public health approach is necessary in the Canadian context, where, until recently, cannabis use was punitively prohibited. The impacts of prohibition and the ensuing criminalization are still strongly felt. Public health practitioners in Canada have long argued that prohibition of cannabis (and the war on drugs overall) harms people who use cannabis by increasing criminal sanctions, increasing stigma towards users and limiting access

to important health services—such as access to care for people living with cannabis use disorders. Additionally, criminalization of cannabis use disproportionately impacts already marginalized groups, such as Indigenous, Black and racialized populations.

A strength of Canada's updated approach will be the inclusion of substance use harm reduction approaches, which give youth the tools they need to make knowledgeable choices about their health and help them in reducing risks and harms linked to cannabis use. Studies carried out in the last few years show that youth are not always clear on how cannabis use may lead to increased risk and harms, especially harms that develop with more use over time. Youth workers and service providers in the sector are in a unique position to provide important information. This information sheet highlights various cannabis resources available for youth and service providers working with youth in Ontario.

Canada's Cannabis legalization framework will:



Prevent **youth and minors** from accessing cannabis.



Displace the illegal **cannabis market**.



Protect **public health and safety** with cannabis product quality and safety requirements.

GENERAL RESOURCES

My cannabis IQ

Developed by [EPION](#)

MyCannabisIQ helps readers stay in-the-know about cannabis, its side effects and risk factors to keep in mind. Resources are organized in three streams: clinicians, families and youth.



www.mycannabisiq.ca

Cannabis: Important things to know

Developed by [Kids Help Phone](#)

This web-based resource provides information on cannabis use for youth, including harm reduction tips.



<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/cannabis-important-things-know/>

Your cannabis questions answered: Get the facts

Developed by [Health Canada](#)

This youth-focused site answers questions about the long- and short-term effects of cannabis use.



<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis.html>

Cannabis

Developed by [CAMH](#)

This web resource provides general information on cannabis, including how cannabis is used and how it makes users feel.



<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/cannabis>

Clearing the smoke on cannabis

Developed by [CCSA](#)

Clearing the Smoke on Cannabis addresses what is known, what's not known and what needs further investigation. The series includes a dedicated youth stream.



<http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/topics/marijuana/marijuana-research/pages/default.aspx>

Cannabis legalization

Developed by [Government of Ontario](#)

This site provides an overview of Ontario's Cannabis Legalization framework including minimum age of purchase, legalization timelines and links to additional resources.



<https://www.ontario.ca/page/cannabis-legalization>

CAMPUS TOOL KITS

Reducing cannabis harms: A guide for Ontario campuses

Developed by [CICMH](#) & [CAMH](#)

This guide was developed with post-secondary settings in mind. Resources available include a toolkit, a webinar and links to additional resources.



<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/cannabis/>

HARM REDUCTION + SAFER USE

Canada's lower risk cannabis use guidelines

Developed by [CRISM](#)

The Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG) give users 10 tips or suggested ways to use cannabis more safely. Resources available include brochures, infographics and a [youth-friendly guide](#).



<http://crismontario.ca/research-projects/lower-risk-cannabis-use-guidelines>

Don't drive high

Developed by [Health Canada](#)

This multimedia youth-focused prevention campaign addresses driving under the influence of cannabis.



<https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/don-t-drive-high.html>

GUIDES FOR PARENTS + GUARDIANS

Cannabis: What parents/guardians and caregivers need to know

Developed by CAMH & School Mental Health Assist

This factsheet on recreational cannabis is for parents/guardians and caregivers of youth in grades 6-12.



<https://smh-assist.ca/blog/cannabis-info-sheet/>

Cannabis talk kit: Know how to talk with your teen

Developed by Drug Free Kids

This resource provides caretakers/guardians with guidelines for structuring conversations with youth on cannabis use.



<https://www.drugfreekidscanada.org/prevention/drug-info/cannabis/>

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