

Recommendations for Lowering Health Risks of Cannabis Use

1

Abstain

The best way to avoid potentially harmful effects of cannabis is to not use. The risks for adverse effects vary in likelihood and severity depending on the person, product and patterns of use. So, risks may not be the same from person to person or from one use to another.

2

Delay

Even if you've already used, consider delaying further use at least until age 25. The human brain continues to develop into the mid-twenties, creating unique health risks for younger users. Effects are more pronounced in younger users who also use intensely and frequently.

3

Use Infrequently

Try limiting use to 1 day per week at most. Daily or near-daily use is strongly related to higher risks of mental and physical health problems. Avoid use before activities that require intact cognitive or physical functioning, like homework, class, exams, driving, work or playing sports.

4

Low THC Content

Choose products with lower THC content and a high CBD:THC ratio. Higher THC-potency (e.g., in oils/concentrates/extracts) is linked with greater risks of acute mental and behavioral issues, such as social anxiety, fear, distrust, panic and psychosis. Cannabidiol (CBD) may lessen some of THC's effects.

5

Avoid Synthetics

Synthetic cannabinoids (e.g., K2, Spice) have been associated with severe side effects, including psychosis, anxiety, nausea, strokes, seizures, fast heart rate and heart attack.

6

Edibles vs Smoking

Regularly inhaling combusted cannabis (smoking) adversely affects respiratory health. Inhaling vaporized cannabis may expose users to additives or toxins that injure the lungs. While edibles have risks (e.g., using a larger dose than intended), they pose little to no respiratory risk.

7

Avoid Deep Inhales

Deep inhalation or holding the breath increases the intake of toxic material. Over the long-term, the risk for a chronic cough and bronchitis increases, especially for frequent users.

8

Wait Before Driving

Wait at least 6 hours before driving. Cannabis affects judgment, coordination and reaction time which are needed to drive safely. Avoid driving at all if using cannabis and alcohol together.

If you are concerned about your use, or want to talk about it in a safe and non-judgmental space, please [visit https://uwm.edu/basics/](https://uwm.edu/basics/) or email adresources@uwm.edu.

The use, possession and distribution of cannabis is illegal in the state of Wisconsin. People who violate local, state or federal laws and policies are subject to fines and penalties. These recommendations offer potentially helpful tips to reduce the risk of adverse health outcomes from cannabis use among (especially, young) users.

Sources: Fischer B, Russel C, et al. Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines: A Comprehensive Update of Evidence and Recommendations. Am J Public Health. 2017; 107: e1-e12. | National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: The current state of evidence and recommendations for research. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/24625.

Health Risks Linked with Cannabis

- Diminished cognitive functioning (memory, learning and attention)
- Addition to cannabis
- Respiratory problems (chronic cough, bronchitis, vaping-related lung damage)
- Mental health problems (social anxiety, paranoia, suicidality, schizophrenia)
- Car crashes
- Low birth weight of newborns