



heretohelp

Mental health and substance use
information you can trust



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

cannabis and mental health

www.heretohelp.bc.ca



Cannabis, also known as marijuana, has a complicated reputation. On one hand, some people use cannabis as medicine. On the other hand, others link it to mental health problems. So what do we know?

Does cannabis cause psychosis or schizophrenia?

Psychosis is a break with reality: a person may sense things that aren't real or have strong beliefs that can't possibly be true. There is a relationship between cannabis and psychosis, but researchers aren't sure if cannabis alone causes psychosis or if there are other factors involved.

The same is true for schizophrenia. Cannabis may be one factor that interacts with other factors. For example, people who use cannabis often may have a higher risk than people who use only occasionally.

Does cannabis improve or worsen anxiety or depression?

Some studies do find that people who use cannabis are more likely to experience depression. It isn't clear if cannabis causes depression or how much social situations and other factors contribute to those study results. Cannabis can both improve and worsen anxiety, depending on the individual and other factors. More research is needed.

What do I need to know to make good decisions for myself?

Many researchers agree that using cannabis at a young age, while the brain is still developing, is not the healthiest option for the brain overall. Using cannabis frequently, in combination with driving, or in combination with other drugs may also increase the risk of harm.

The benefits and risks of using any substance depend a lot on the situation that they're used in. Occasionally using a little on the weekend might have fewer risks and may be enjoyable for some people. But using cannabis frequently to cope or fit in or using cannabis in unsafe situations may increase the risk of harm.

How can I can reduce the risk of harm?

- Avoid using too much or too often
- Avoid mixing cannabis with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- Use cannabis in a safe space—such as with people you trust
- Use cannabis safely—don't drive high

Learn more

Visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca for more information, including *Learn About Cannabis (Marijuana)*, *Cannabis Use and Youth: A parent's guide*, and *You and Substance Use: Stuff to think about ... and ways to make changes*.

If you'd like some support or local resources, call the Alcohol and Drug Information Referral Service at 1-800-663-1441 or 604-660-9382 in Greater Vancouver.