



CANNABIS: Information for Parents and Guardians

What is cannabis?

- Cannabis is a plant that contains chemicals called cannabinoids.
- It is used for its mind-altering effects.
- The two main cannabinoids are **THC** (tetrahydrocannabinol) and **CBD** (cannabidiol):
 - THC is psychoactive and acts on the brain to create a “high” feeling.
 - CBD is not psychoactive and is being studied for possible medical purposes.

How is cannabis used?

- It can be **smoked** like a cigarette, in a pipe or water pipe or **vaped** using a vapourizer or e-cigarette, which means the cannabis is heated to make vapour. When inhaled, THC is absorbed quickly in the lungs. The effects are felt within minutes and can last six hours or more.
- It can be **eaten** or **drank** in foods and drinks. When ingested, THC is absorbed more slowly. The effects are felt in 30 minutes to 2 hours and can last twelve hours or more.

How does using cannabis effect my teen?

- The brain is still developing and growing up until about the age of 25. **Not using cannabis is the best way to avoid the effects your health.**
- Using cannabis at an early age and using it almost every day or more can:
 - Effect how the brain grows and works that can have lasting effects on memory, concentration, intelligence and the ability to think and make decisions.
 - Increase the chance of experiencing symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia, especially if there is a family history of these conditions.
 - Increase the chance of becoming dependent.

What will the laws be in Ontario when cannabis is legal? (Updated August 2018)

- Only adults aged 19 or older can buy and use.
- It is **still illegal** for youth under 19 to have cannabis in their possession or to use it.
- Cannabis cannot be used in public – only in or outside a private home.
- More information is available at Ontario.ca/Cannabis

How can I talk with my teen about cannabis?

You are your teen's first line of defence against drugs. Start the conversation about drugs early, talk often and be open. Here are a few tips to help you prepare:

- **Start with you.** Try to put yourself in their shoes and think about what influenced your beliefs and decisions about cannabis or other drugs when you were young. Also, reflect on your own use of cannabis or alcohol and how this may be influencing your teen's choices.
- **Be prepared.** Make sure you have the facts about cannabis and plan a few points you want to share including setting expectations.
- **Look for opportunities to start the conversation.** Try taking a walk with your teen or using a recent newspaper article, social media posts or TV show to start a conversation.
- **Be sure to listen.** Ask open-ended questions and then listen. Respect their opinion and that they are the experts in their own culture.
- **Visit ParentingInOttawa.ca/TalkCannabis** to download the **FREE Cannabis Talk Kit** from Drug Free Kids Canada.

My teen is already using cannabis. What should I do?

- **Talk to them!** Even if past conversations have not gone well, now is the time to reflect and change your approach. Express empathy and compassion. Explore why they chose to use and healthier alternatives.
- **Visit TheLinkOttawa.ca/Cannabis** together to learn about choices your teen can make that considers their mental health, physical health and safety.
- **Reach out for help.** If you are concerned about your teen's cannabis use, there are places you can turn for help. See the list of resources below.

More questions?

- Visit ParentingInOttawa.ca/Drugs or connect with a Public Health Nurse and other parents on Facebook at [Facebook.com/ParentingInOttawa](https://www.facebook.com/ParentingInOttawa)
- To speak with a Public Health Nurse call **613-PARENTS** (613-727-3687) Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or e-mail ParentingInOttawa@ottawa.ca

Mental Health and Addiction Resources

- **Parents' Lifelines of Eastern Ontario, PLEO.on.ca**; 613-321-3211
- **Ottawa Addictions Access and Referral Services, SAATO.ca/en** 613-241-5202 (16+ only)
- **Kids Help Phone, KidsHelpPhone.ca**; 1-800-668-6868
- **Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services, Rideauwood.org**; 613-724-4881
- **Maison Fraternité, MaisonFraternite.ca**; 613-741-2523 (French only)