CANADIAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
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Cannabasics

Understanding Consumption

The primary reasons people consume cannabis (and other substances):

01 // Feelings of Well-Being 02 // Self-Medication 03 // Performance 04 // Discovery

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01 // FEELINGS OF WELL-BEING

In some cases, people consume cannabis to increase feelings of well-being. Many people feel that cannabis products provide feelings of relaxation, satisfaction, and happiness as well as a means for socialization or spiritual and cultural expression.

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02 // SELF-MEDICATION

Some people choose cannabis as a way to self-medicate. People may consume cannabis to reduce social anxiety or stress, or to reduce symptoms associated with trauma or depression.

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03 // PERFORMANCE

People may consume cannabis to be more productive or perform better in certain tasks. Some people believe that cannabis consumption helps them to be more creative.

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04 // DISCOVERY

In some contexts, people may consume cannabis to explore and discover. Some people believe cannabis can offer new experiences, feelings or insights they could not find otherwise.

Understanding Consumption

REASONS FOR CONSUMPTION

People consume cannabis for a variety of reasons. The primary reasons people consume cannabis are as follows:[6]

01. **Feelings of well-being:** In some cases, people consume cannabis to increase feelings of well-being. Many people feel that cannabis products provide feelings of relaxation, satisfaction, and happiness as well as a means for socialization or spiritual and cultural expression.

02. **Self-Medication:** Some people choose cannabis as a way to self-medicate. People may consume cannabis to reduce social anxiety or stress, or to reduce symptoms associated with trauma or depression.

03. **Performance:** People may consume cannabis to be more productive or perform better in certain tasks. Some people believe that cannabis consumption helps them to be more creative.

04. **Discovery:** In some contexts, people may consume cannabis to explore and discover. Some people believe cannabis can offer new experiences, feelings or insights they could not find otherwise.

CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

People will vary in their cannabis consumption patterns, ranging from:[7]

• Never consuming cannabis (abstinent);

• Occasional consumption with very little negative effects;

• Regular consumption with very little negative effects; and

• Regular consumption accompanied by difficulties in their lives due to consumption (around 10% of cannabis consumers).[8]

People may move along the continuum of cannabis consumption forwards and backwards, ranging from abstinence to regular consumption over time. Decreasing the potential harms associated with cannabis consumption may involve moving down the continuum and reducing consumption, or may involve changing the method of consumption.

CANNABIS USE DISORDER

For those who experience negative outcomes from frequent cannabis consumption, there are clinical characterizations for cannabis use disorder (CUD). Cannabis Use Disorder is characterized by a recurrent pattern of consumption where at least two of the following situations occur in a 12-month period:[9]

• increased tolerance;

• withdrawal;

Understanding Consumption

- consuming much more than intended;

- unsuccessful attempts to quit;

- a lot of time lost consuming or recovering;

- reduced activities;

- continued consumption despite persistent physical or psychological problems caused or made worse by cannabis consumption;

- failure to fulfill major roles at work, school or home;

- use in physically hazardous situations;

- continued consumption, despite social or interpersonal problems caused or intensified by cannabis consumption; and / or

- strong urges or cravings to consume.

REFERENCES

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8 Volkow ND, Baler RD, Compton WM, Weiss SR. Adverse health effects of marijuana use. N Engl J Med 2014;370(23):2219-27.

9 American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. (5th Edition). Washington, DC.

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMPTION DETAILED OVERVIEW