

# Legalization of Cannabis



## Factsheet for Students

### What does the legalization of cannabis mean?

As of October 17, 2018, cannabis will be legal for adults only. It will still be illegal for youth under 19 to purchase, sell or consume cannabis. It will also be illegal to sell cannabis products that appeal to youth or that have packaging or labelling that makes them appeal to youth.

Vancouver School Board's Code of Conduct around controlled substances for students remain unchanged: Students may not attend school or school functions while in possession of or while under the influence of any intoxicating, banned or controlled substances.

However, with attitudes toward cannabis consumption changing, it is important to understand cannabis use and how to make healthy choices about marijuana.

### Science says

Research suggests that youth who start using drugs early and frequently are at much greater risk of problem drug use. Experts recommend not using or delaying use until age 20 or older.

Science indicates that using cannabis regularly before age 25 can harm the development of your brain and lead to long-term problems with memory, cognition and attention. Delaying use until the brain is fully developed decreases potential impacts. Cannabis can also affect your ability to think and make decisions in all aspects of life including school, recreational activities and relationships.

### How cannabis works in the body



Cannabis has different effects on different people. Some feel calm and relaxed; others feel energized and stimulated; and others feel anxious and paranoid. The effects depend on dosage, strain (levels of THC/CBD), setting, the person (age, their biochemistry, mood/mindset, and diet).

The effects of cannabis may be increased if it is used often or taken with alcohol or other drugs. Cannabis can be smoked, vaporized, applied to the skin, cooked in food or beverages, or brewed into tea. The effects of edibles take longer to be felt than smoking, are stronger and last much longer, especially for young people.

#### SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF USE MAY INCLUDE:



**Mental effects:** more anxious or more relaxed; may experience paranoia, delusions, hallucinations, fear and changes in thinking or ability to make decisions.



**Emotional effects:** may feel "high," happy or euphoric. It may also impact social interaction (may be more personable/outgoing, or more quiet/subdued). May feel numb, or no emotions at all.



**Physical effects:** may feel sleepy or hungry. If in pain, cannabis user may feel a decline in physical pain temporarily. Some may experience an increased heart rate, body tremors or red eyes. Often the senses may be heightened.

#### LONG TERM

Using cannabis at an early age increases the risk for long-term effects. Cannabis may worsen symptoms of depression or anxiety and may also cause symptoms such as panic attacks, paranoia, hallucinations. It may also trigger the onset of schizophrenia and other psychoses among people who have a family history of mental illness. Cannabis inhalation may increase the risk of respiratory conditions including asthma and bronchitis.

## Know the facts



It takes at least **10 minutes** to feel the effect of inhaled cannabis and **at least one hour** to feel the effects of edible cannabis products.

**Mixing cannabis with alcohol or other drugs** should be avoided as this can increase impairment and cause symptoms such as anxiety, dizziness, sweating, nausea and vomiting.



**Operating a car, motorcycle, bike or boat while high is impaired driving and is illegal**, just like drinking and driving. Even small amounts of cannabis can affect a person's attention, reaction time and ability to judge distances, even if they don't feel impaired. Don't drive or ride with a driver who has used cannabis.



**If too much cannabis is used**, remain calm, stay hydrated, and eat something. Stay with friends in a safe place. The effects will wear off.

## Where to get more information and help?



**VSB's Supporting And Connecting Youth (SACY) program provides substance use health promotion** to engage Vancouver students, parents, teachers, administrators and the greater community. Visit your school counsellor or your SACY worker or take part in a SACY sponsored event at your school.

SACY works in schools with youth and offers a wealth of resources about drug use prevention and health. Check out their website at <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sacy>.