

CLEARING THE AIR ABOUT RECREATIONAL CANNABIS USE



It seems like everyone is talking about cannabis.

Public discussions about legalization of recreational cannabis may have led people to believe that this drug is harmless. Ontario's doctors want to provide clarity on some of the myths associated with use of recreational cannabis, particularly for youth. Before using, be informed of the risks.

MYTH: Recreational cannabis isn't that bad for you.

FACT: Recreational cannabis is associated with a number of negative health risks and is an inherently harmful substance. The health risks caused by recreational cannabis can best be avoided by abstaining from use.

MYTH: It's okay to use recreational cannabis when you are young, it impacts people of all ages the same way.

FACT: There is strong evidence that shows recreational cannabis impacts brain development. We know that the brain continues to develop through early adulthood, until the age of 25.

MYTH: Recreational cannabis helps anxiety issues.

FACT: Recreational cannabis use can have harmful effects on the mental health of some at risk individuals, and generally harmful effects on most users. It has been found to contribute to anxiety and depression by increasing the negative feelings associated with these conditions. Evidence suggests that using recreational cannabis during teenage years is linked to the development of mood and anxiety disorders.

MYTH: Recreational Cannabis isn't addictive.

FACT: Using recreational cannabis can be addictive. The addiction risk is 1 in 10 for adults and 1 in 6 for those who start using as a teen.

MYTH: Recreational cannabis doesn't cause any long-term harm to the body.

FACT: Recreational cannabis is known to have negative effects on cognition. Effects include difficulties with attention, problem solving and impaired judgement, decision-making and ability to learn.

MYTH: Smoking recreational cannabis isn't as bad as smoking Tobacco.

FACT: No matter what, smoking harms your respiratory tract. Tar from a cannabis cigarette harms the lungs, and smoking it increases your chance of respiratory diseases, including lung cancer.

MYTH: It's just fun, and there are no real negative effects of using recreational cannabis.

FACT: Users of recreational cannabis can develop cannabis use disorder. Symptoms of this disorder include tolerance and withdrawal, which are also seen in other addictive substances such as alcohol and tobacco. Cannabis withdrawal includes irritability, anger or aggression, anxiety, depressed mood, restlessness, difficulty sleeping, decreased appetite, and weight loss.

MYTH: Using recreational cannabis and then driving isn't as bad as using alcohol and driving.

FACT: While the effects of recreational cannabis are different from alcohol, it similarly impairs reaction times and the ability to concentrate on the road. When a person consumes recreational cannabis, his/her heart rate increases, short-term memory is impaired, and attention, motor skills, reaction time, and the organization of complex information are all reduced. All of these impacts are crucial for driving a motor vehicle.

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