



CANNABIS USE AND COVID-19

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is providing this overview of the potential impact of cannabis use and COVID-19 for First Nations. During these times, it is important to be aware of any increased risks to you and your family. As the situation is evolving rapidly, we encourage you to visit the AFN COVID-19 webpage to access up-to-date information and resources at <https://www.afn.ca/coronavirus>.

General information on cannabis use

Cannabis is legally available in Canada for recreational and medical uses. Medical uses of cannabis include pain management, reducing mental health impacts of anxiety or depression, and supporting harm reduction in addictions treatment. Recreational cannabis is often smoked or vaped, but can also be consumed as edibles, topicals, extracts or oils. It is important to always read the label on cannabis products to know what you are consuming.

How cannabis use increases health risks during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Smoking and vaping increase the risk of contracting COVID-19 because they can destroy some of the lungs' natural defense mechanisms.
- The act of smoking means that fingers are in contact with the lips, which increases the possibility of transmission of the virus from hand to mouth.
- Sharing pipes, joints and other smoking and vaping products involves sharing of mouth pieces, which could facilitate the transmission of COVID-19.
- Black market cannabis can be tainted with other drugs, including opioids, increasing the risk of overdose. An overdose patient requiring hospital care increases the risk to themselves and their community of infection from COVID-19 and adds strain to a healthcare system already dealing with the burden of the pandemic.

****Important note: There are NO known or suspected uses of cannabis or CBD oil as a cure or treatment for COVID-19.**

How to reduce your risks

- Practise physical distancing by not smoking in groups or participating in “puff-and-pass” behaviour.
- Do not share cannabis products such as joints, pipes, bongs, vape pens, or e-cigarettes.
- If you are currently using cannabis or CBD oil for medical or therapeutic purposes, continue to use cannabis or CBD oil as you normally would under the direction of your healthcare provider.

- If you are a recreational user of cannabis, consider reducing or limiting cannabis use during the pandemic.
- Start slow and go slow when consuming edibles. It can take between 30 minutes and 2 hours to start feeling the effects of edible cannabis.
- While cannabis stores remain open in most provinces and territories, it is possible to order cannabis online in many regions. If possible, consider ordering online to ensure adherence to public health physical distancing guidelines.

Additional resources:

Government of Canada:

Cannabis Resources <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis.html>

First Nations Health Authority:

Non-Medical Cannabis Information <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use/non-medical-cannabis-information>

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation:

Cannabis Toolkit <https://thunderbirdpf.org/new-cannabis-toolkit/>

