

# CANNABIS

Weed out the Myths





## MYTH

Because weed is natural, it's harmless



## FACT

- Many people think that cannabis is safe for anyone to use. This is a myth. The highest risk is for those who start using cannabis before age 17.
- Research shows that your brain is not finished developing until you are 25. THC, the substance that makes you feel "high", can change parts of your brain as it develops.
- Even once your brain is fully developed, cannabis can still cause permanent brain changes in some people. There is no risk-free age to use cannabis.





## FACT

- The amount of THC in dried cannabis has increased from 3% in the 1980s to around 15% today. Some strains can have as much as 30% THC. More THC means that your risk of harm is greater.
- Smoking cannabis regularly (once a week or more for months to years) can cause breathing problems like a daily cough, bronchitis and wheezing. This can make it difficult for you to breathe and even to play your favourite sport.
- Synthetic cannabis (e.g. K2 and Spice) has even more severe health risks including death. Avoid using these products.





## MYTH

Everyone is using weed



## FACT

- 83% of Durham Region students in grades 7-12 have not used cannabis in the last year.

**82% of students  
in grades 7-12  
have never tried  
cannabis.**





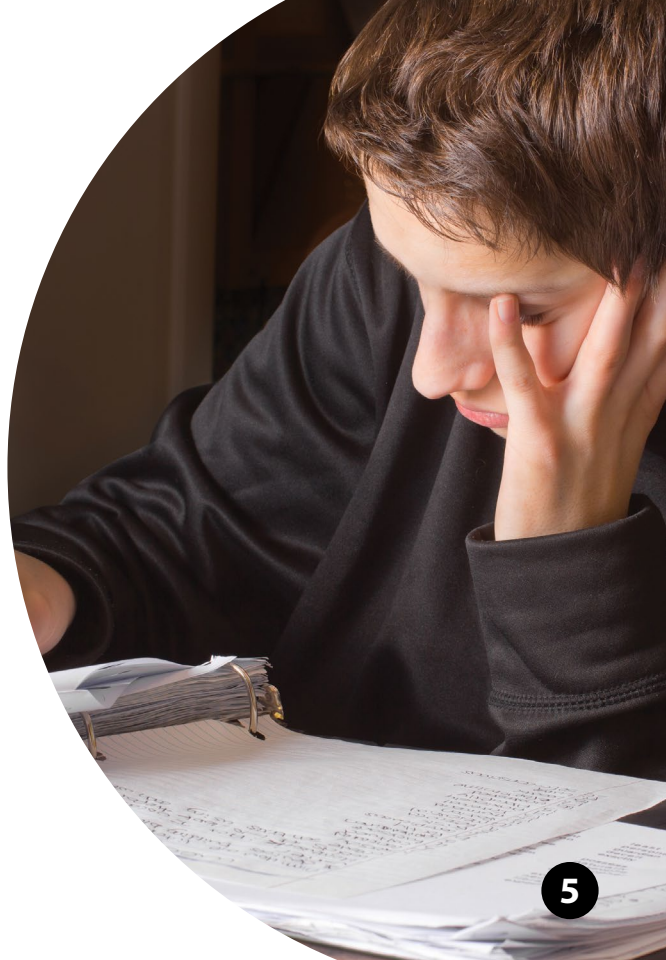
## MYTH

Weed helps you focus and improves your concentration



## FACT

- Teens who use cannabis regularly are more likely to have difficulty learning, memory issues, and lower grades in math and reading.
- Studies show that these effects can last for weeks after using cannabis. This can cause problems with school work and many other activities you enjoy.





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**MYTH**

Using cannabis makes you a better driver  
by improving your focus



## FACT

- Cannabis use impairs your depth perception, attention span, concentration and slows your reaction time. This can affect your ability to drive safely.
- Driving after using cannabis can double your risk of being seriously injured or dying in a crash. This risk increases if you use cannabis and alcohol together.
- Driving after using cannabis can be as dangerous as drunk driving and carries the same penalties.





 **MYTH**

Weed is not addictive

 **FACT**

- If you start using cannabis regularly at a young age, you're more likely to become addicted later.
- If you suddenly stop using, you may have withdrawal symptoms like irritability, anxiety, and disturbed sleep.

**1 in 6 people who start using cannabis as a teen will become addicted.**





## MYTH

Legalization means that everyone can use weed



## FACT

- Legalization means that you have to be 19 or older to buy, use or have recreational cannabis in Ontario.
- Cannabis use is not allowed at school, at work, in indoor public spaces or in vehicles.
- Remember: Just because something is legal, does not mean it is healthy or good for you. Cigarettes are legal but also are proven to cause cancer.





## MYTH

Weed is a natural way to manage feelings of anxiety or depression



## FACT

- Cannabis can worsen symptoms of anxiety or depression. It can even increase thoughts of suicide.
- Using cannabis regularly as a teen can also increase your risk of psychosis or schizophrenia. This risk is even greater for those with a family history of these illnesses or who use cannabis with high levels of THC.



## MYTH

Vaping weed is safe since you're inhaling only water vapour



## FACT

- Some people think that when you vape, only water vapour is inhaled.
- The aerosol generated from cannabis vaping has been shown to contain harmful substances- including cancer causing chemicals.
- Contaminants, such as heavy metals, may leach into the cannabis extract and be inhaled in the aerosol.



## MYTH

Edibles are a risk-free way to use cannabis since you don't inhale smoke into your lungs



## FACT

- Cannabis edibles take longer to feel the effects (30 minutes-2 hours) compared to smoking or vaping cannabis. This could lead some people to take too much and result in cannabis poisoning.
- The effects of edibles also last longer (up to 12 hours or more) and, for some people, have more intense effects than smoking the same amount of dried cannabis.
- While cannabis edibles are safer for your lungs compared to smoking, they do come with their own risks.





# Cut Down Your Risk

Don't drive or get into a car with someone that is high - if you are a passenger or driver, always plan a safe way home.

If you choose to use cannabis:

- Delay using as a teen - the later in life you start using, the lower your risk of problems
- Use less often
- Talk to a parent, friend or someone you trust about how to cut down or quit
- Choose products with lower levels of THC
- Don't combine cannabis and alcohol
- Choose safer ways of using by checking out [camh.ca](https://www.camh.ca):
  - **The Blunt Truth Useful Tips About Safer Ways to Use Cannabis**
  - **Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)**

# Where To Get Help

**If you are concerned about your cannabis use, talk to your doctor or contact:**

## **ConnexOntario:**

24-hour free, confidential health services by phone, text or online chat for people experiencing problems with alcohol, drugs, mental illness or gambling

**1-866-531-2600 or text CONNEX to 247247**

[connexontario.ca/](https://connexontario.ca/)

## **Pinewood Centre:**

24-hour telephone support and crisis walk-in services to support people with alcohol, drug, concurrent mental health and gambling related concerns

**1-888-881-8878 or 905-723-8195**

## **Kids Help Phone:**

Bilingual phone counselling, web counselling and referral service for children and youth. The service is completely anonymous, free and confidential.

**1-800-668-6868 (24/7) or text CONNECT to 686868**

[kidshelpphone.ca](https://kidshelpphone.ca)

## **Durham Health Connection Line:**

Speak to a public health nurse

**905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729**

[durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)

# Where Can I Get More Information?

Get the facts about cannabis in Canada at [canada.ca/cannabis](https://canada.ca/cannabis)

Get the latest on cannabis legalization at [ontario.ca/cannabis](https://ontario.ca/cannabis)

Learn about safer use of cannabis, see **Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines** at [camh.ca](https://camh.ca)



HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT

**Durham Health Connection Line**  
**905 668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729**  
[durham.ca/cannabis](https://durham.ca/cannabis)



If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.