

Lessons From Colorado

- Significant drop in criminal arrests
- Little change in number of people using cannabis
- Most problematic substance use continues to be alcohol
- Higher number of emergency department visits and hospitalizations
- Concern about impaired driving
- Increased workplace safety concerns
- Need to manage “pot tourism”
- Not a significant revenue stream to date

Take Home Messages

- Don't panic about increased prevalence of cannabis use because of legalization
- Remain aware of the cultural and social values at play in various communities around cannabis
- Education and empowerment are proven approaches instead of “protection” campaigns to discourage use
- Best prevention strategy is a holistic approach rather than targeting any specific drug
- Stigmatization of users doesn't discourage use

Mental Health In Our Community

Integrating research into the community is our way of empowering you for better outcomes in mental health. The Mathison Centre's 'DID YOU KNOW' series provides the information you need.

Acknowledgements

The mission of The Mathison Centre is to promote internationally recognized research and education on the early identification, treatment and prevention of mental disorders with a focus on youth. Our researchers are pivotal to this effort. We duly acknowledge Drs. Rebecca Haines-Saah and Matthew Hill for their contributions to the development of this brochure.

DID YOU KNOW?

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In partnership with the Hotchkiss Brain Institute, the Mathison Centre supports researchers and clinicians with world-class expertise in brain and neuroscience research who work together to enhance mental health care in our community and beyond.



The Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research & Education

CANNABIS DID YOU KNOW?





CANNABIS 101 – SEPARATING REAL ‘SMOKE’ FROM ‘PUFF’

Cannabis use in your community

- 34 per cent of Canadians have used cannabis in their lifetime
- 17 per cent of Canadian youth (grades seven to 12) reported using cannabis, while 40 per cent reported using alcohol

Risks associated with use

- Smoking cannabis negatively affects a person’s respiratory health
- Cannabis impairs driving, and combining cannabis with other substances, including alcohol, can result in even greater impairment
- Cannabis use is associated with lower birth weight if used during pregnancy
- Research has indicated earlier onset of schizophrenia or other psychoses in persons at risk

Benefits associated with use

- Cannabis has been used in the treatment of spasticity in Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Cannabis is well-known for its benefit as a chronic pain relief
- Cannabis has been known to reduce chemotherapy induced nausea

Decriminalization versus legalization

• What is decriminalization?

Anyone in possession of a small amount of cannabis for personal use will not face legal charges.

• What is legalization?

Individuals can’t be arrested, ticketed or convicted if they follow the applicable laws that govern the use and commercialization of cannabis.

Arguments for legalization

- A high rate of Canadians hold criminal records for possession of cannabis
- Statistics show high rates of use by youth, and legalization opens the door for education and informed choices
- Illegality of cannabis results in profits going to organized crime
- Majority of Canadians (62 per cent) support legalization

A public health approach

This approach recognizes that people use substances for anticipated beneficial effects. It is conscious of potential harms of the substances and the unintended effects of control policies. It strives to attain a balance in the benefit to harm ratios of the use of substances such as cannabis.

Guidelines for using cannabis

Science has proven that cannabis use has adverse health effects. To completely avoid exposure to such risks, abstinence is the only option. However, the following guidelines can help to reduce risk for cannabis users.

- Use less potent/lower THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) doses. THC is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis
- Avoid frequent use
- Avoid risk to the developing brain by delaying use until early adulthood
- Use less harmful (smokeless) delivery systems such as vaporizers
- Avoid driving for at least three to four hours or longer after use
- Abstinence is recommended for people with higher risk (e.g. personal or family history of psychosis, substance addiction, cardiovascular problems, and women who are pregnant)

