

Health Risks Linked with Cannabis

- Impaired cognitive functioning (memory, learning, attention)
- Cannabis use disorder/dependence
- Worse respiratory symptoms and more frequent chronic bronchitis
- Mental health problems (e.g., social anxiety, paranoia, suicidality, schizophrenia)
- Motor vehicle crashes
- Low birth weight of newborns

The risks for adverse effects vary in likelihood and severity depending on the person, product and patterns of use. Frequent, heavy use of high potency cannabis at a young age increases the risk of adverse health outcomes.

If you have questions or concerns about your use, or you want to talk about it in a safe and non-judgmental space, please learn about types of support available at UWM by visiting:

[uwm.edu/wellness/
health-services/
alcohol-and-other-drugs](https://uwm.edu/wellness/health-services/alcohol-and-other-drugs)



**Student Health
& Wellness Center**

9 Ways to Lower Health Risks of Cannabis Use

The use, possession and distribution of cannabis is illegal in the state of Wisconsin. People who violate local, state, or federal laws and policies are subject to fines and penalties. These recommendations offer potentially helpful tips to reduce the risk of adverse health outcomes from cannabis use among (especially, young) users.

Sources: Fisher B, et al. Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines for Reducing Health Harms from Non-medical Cannabis Use: A comprehensive evidence and recommendations update. Intl J Drug Policy. 2022. | National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: The current state of evidence and recommendations for research. Washington, DC: The National Academics Press.

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1) Abstain

The best way to avoid potential harmful effects of cannabis is to not use. Use is especially discouraged if you or a family member has a history of psychosis, mood disorder, substance use disorder, or pre-existing cardiovascular risks.

2) Delay

Even if you've already used, consider delaying further use at least until age 25. The human brain continues to develop into the mid-twenties, creating unique developmental health and well-being risks for younger users.

3) Use Infrequently

Try limiting yourself to infrequent or occasional use (e.g., 1 day per week, weekend only). Avoid repeated use throughout the day or night. Avoid use before activities that require intact cognitive or physical functioning, like homework, class, driving, work or sports.

4) Avoid Driving

Wait at least 6-8 hours (inhaled use) and 8-12 hours (edible use) before driving due to effects on judgment, attention, coordination and reaction time. Avoid driving at all if using cannabis and alcohol together.

5) Use Legal, Quality-Controlled Cannabis

Unregulated for quality and safety, illegal cannabis products & synthetic derivatives (including Delta-8 THC) obtained through friends, social media/ internet, vape shops and gas stations are less predictable in potency and may contain harmful contaminants that can cause acute adverse effects. Legally regulated and labeled cannabis from state-licensed dispensaries (outside WI) is more predictable.

6) Choose Low-Potency THC

Choose products with lower THC content or a high CBD:THC ratio. More highly concentrated products (e.g. extracts, dabs) are linked with greater risk for anxiety, agitation, paranoia, psychosis, and, for regular users, addiction.

7) Consider Risks Specific to Route of Use

Regularly inhaling combusted cannabis (smoking) is harmful respiratory health. Vaping may expose users to additives or toxins that injure the lungs. Edibles, while without these same respiratory effects, can have unintended effects due to overconsumption.

8) Take a Break

If you are experiencing cognitive issues with memory, attention, or concentration, problems with school, or if you feel more depressed or anxious, consider taking a break or reducing potency.

9) Seek Help

If you notice signs of **cannabis use disorder** (cravings, withdrawal, neglect of obligations, difficulty controlling or reducing use) or if you feel suicidal,

text or call the UW 24/7 mental health support line at 888-531-2142.