



Reflect and discuss

What is cannabis?



Cannabis is a plant that humans have been using for thousands of years.

Cannabis has psychoactive chemicals that tap into our endocannabinoid system, which plays a role in regulating our sleep, mood, appetite and memory, among other things that help us feel balanced.

Cannabis can be smoked, vaped, or ingested. The different strengths and ways of using cannabis produce different effects.

Most young people don't use cannabis. Those who do use cannabis most often use it for fun. But some youth use cannabis to manage stress or low mood. A few use cannabis to help manage symptoms of mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. Over time, though, cannabis use can increase the chances of experiencing symptoms of mental illness.

A person's relationship with cannabis and mental health can change over time. People who experience problematic use often talk about how they started using socially, to have a good time with friends, and that their use changed over time. They began to use more, and it no longer had the same effect.

Even if people do experience mental ill-health or problematic substance use, recovery can happen! As individuals, learning more about what helps keep us healthy and balanced, and what brings us joy and purpose is a key part of recovery.

References

1. Government of Canada: [Cannabis resources](#)
2. Health Canada: [Canadian Cannabis Survey 2020](#)
3. McCreary Centre Society: [BC Adolescent Health Survey 2019](#)
4. University of Waterloo: [Compass System. Cannabis and mental health](#)
5. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. [The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids: The Current State of Evidence and Recommendations for Research.](#)
6. Get Sensible: [The Sensible Cannabis Education: A toolkit for educating youth](#)
7. Healthline: [Endocannabinoid system](#)

Resources

YMCA Cannabis Hub: [Cannabis Awareness Resources](#)



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Activity steps

1. Watch the [What is cannabis?](#) video.
2. Use the **What is cannabis handout** as a reference.
3. Work in pairs or small groups to explore and discuss the questions below.

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How can you tell if a person's relationship with cannabis is healthy or unhealthy? Substance use is complex, and there are many factors to consider. What questions do you need to ask to understand more about the relationship?

In small groups, consider the scenarios below and discuss each person's relationship with cannabis. You might not always agree!

Scenarios

- Jax has a part-time job and spends most of his money on cannabis. He says he likes using it when chilling with his friends, but recently he's been using it alone most of the time.
- Erin and Allan have been using cannabis regularly since Grade 8. High school graduation is four months away and they are stressed out about finishing their classes and course work.
- Most nights Lee uses a small amount of cannabis before going to sleep. Their parents don't like cannabis so Lee has to hide it.
- Diana wants to try using cannabis because her sister said it helps with menstrual cramps. But she worries about the impact it might have on her mental health.
- Make your own scenario.

Keep note of the strategies you used for making decisions about what's healthy and unhealthy, and share your strategy with the group.

"A person's relationship with cannabis and mental health can change over time."