



# Talking to Youth About Cannabis Vaping

## A Guide for Healthcare Professionals

### Concerns About Vaping Cannabis

Vaping cannabis poses risks for mental and physical health harms. Chemicals created in the heating process can be harmful when inhaled and may affect breathing. Vaping unregulated cannabis products has also been associated with severe lung illness, causing coughing, shortness of breath and chest pain.

Cannabis vaping products differ in the levels of THC and CBD they contain. Using vaping products that have high levels of THC increases the risk for over-intoxication. Over-intoxication can cause severe anxiety, vomiting and paranoia.

Further research is needed to understand the full effects of frequent and long-term cannabis vaping on brain, respiratory and cardiovascular functioning.

Start the conversation with youth about cannabis vaping to have an open and evidence-based discussion.

Daily or almost daily cannabis use has been associated with an increased risk of cognitive impairment, psychosis and cannabis use disorder. The risk for developing these conditions is higher among individuals who:

- Use cannabis products high in THC
- Use cannabis daily or almost daily
- Initiate frequent cannabis use during adolescence
- Have a family history of mental health or substance use disorders

Initiating frequent cannabis use during adolescence may be associated with **structural brain changes** and **alterations in brain functioning**.

For more information about cannabis and vaping, visit [ccsa.ca/cannabis](https://ccsa.ca/cannabis).

### Starting the Conversation

Youth may be uncomfortable talking about their cannabis vaping for fear of judgment and the repercussions of using the substance under the legal age.

Put youth at ease for a two-way conversation by taking the following approaches:

- Remind them that as part of their medical examination the conversation is confidential.
- Be empathetic, non-judgmental and supportive.
- Use language that encourages openness, trust and understanding.
- Avoid language that could be stigmatizing such as stoner, addict or user.
- Focus on the facts.



## Questions to Get Started

**1. Have you used or tried vaping cannabis?**

Explore the types of cannabis vaping products they use (e.g., oils, dried products) and if these products include THC, CBD or both.

**2. How long have you been vaping cannabis and how often do you do so?**

Discuss the harms and risks of vaping cannabis both short and long term. Note that frequent and heavy cannabis use can cause the body to become dependent on cannabis and lead to cannabis use disorder.

**3. Do you know the amount or concentration of THC and CBD in the product you vape?**

Cannabis products with higher levels of THC increase the risk of over-intoxication, cognitive-impairment, psychiatric disorders and cannabis use disorder.

**4. What sources do you use to get your cannabis products and vaping devices?**

Cannabis products and vaping devices from illegal, unregulated sources can have health and safety risks. They may be contaminated with other substances and devices may be defective, risking injuries such as burns.

**5. People vape cannabis for various reasons. Why do you think you vape cannabis?**

Youth vape cannabis for a variety of reasons including perceived health benefits such as managing stress, anxiety and sleep. Understanding their reasons for use can open discussion about alternative approaches to better support them.

Starting the conversation may not be easy,  
but what you have to say matters.