

Safe cannabis use during COVID-19



Supporting Indigenous wellness during COVID-19

This fact sheet is part of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's commitment to provide culturally-grounded and strength-based supports for First Nations people during COVID-19. These resources can provide guidance as our communities navigate the current global health crisis, while continuing to face existing health challenges, including substance use and mental health issues.

Cannabis use during COVID-19 may create challenges when it comes to safe supply or cannabis withdrawal.

The First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum can help us reconnect to our strengths as Indigenous people, provide a reminder of our resilience and help us see how these gifts can be alternatives to cannabis use, reducing potential harms. We can call on our strengths when making an informed decision about cannabis. Understanding our own strengths can build self-confidence and hope for the future. (Thunderbird, 2015)

TIPS TO CONNECT WITH CULTURE TO SUPPORT WELLNESS

- sit with an Elder (if they are part of your social distancing unit) to learn and have tea
- take part in a virtual talking circle, make phone calls or connect online if possible
- if you are feeling overwhelmed, do a smudge or prayer (reminder, sweat lodge is NOT recommended during COVID-19)
- utilize all the ways we know can improve our wellness, through meditation and prayers, using our culture, eating, crafts, volunteering, etc.
- spend time on the land
- learn how to harvest/plant and use natural foods and medicines

(Hopkins, C. & Restoule, B., 2020)

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Symptoms vary depending on the amount and frequency of use. Withdrawal can begin within a week after discontinued use, and peak within 10 days. Some symptoms include:

- depression, mood swings
- irritability and difficulty sleeping, restlessness
- headaches
- chills
- stomach pains
- diminished appetite
- cravings for cannabis that can last for months
- anxiety and agitation

(Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Branch at HealthCanada, 2018)

TIPS TO MANAGE WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

- stay hydrated with water
- avoid eating sweets and junk food, as they can increase severity of symptoms
- try to regulate your sleep (withdrawal can disturb regular sleep for weeks)
- try natural sleep aids such as chamomile tea or melatonin
- exercise regularly and spend time on the land

(American Addiction Centers, 2020)

It is important to be careful and responsible when consuming cannabis to avoid spreading COVID-19.

- don't share joints, vapes, pipes or bongs
- COVID-19 is spread through droplets when you cough, sneeze or speak which can spread to cannabis tools
- avoid sharing cannabis with someone outside your household, someone who has COVID-19 or if you have the virus
- avoid smoking or vaping if possible, as COVID-19 causes infections in the nose, throat and lungs which can worsen with smoking/vaping
- try switching to another method of consumption (edibles for example) to avoid irritation to the lungs
- if possible, order your cannabis online from a local cannabis dispensary for pick-up or delivery

(First Nations Health Authority, 2020)

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