

Youth protection

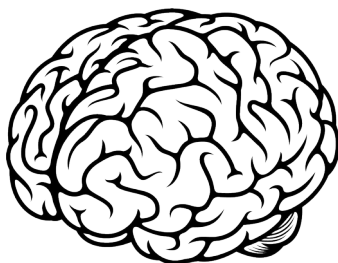
Frequent cannabis use may lead to cognitive impairment in adolescents

Reduction of gray matter in the brain, as THC can disrupt the critical phase of brain development (Battistella et al., 2014)

Negative impact on areas of the prefrontal cortex that control important cognitive processes

Changes in brain function that negatively impact academic, occupational, and social performance

Impairment of short-term memory and reduction in concentration, attention span and problem-solving abilities (Volkow et al., 2014, Chen et al., 2009, Zalesky et al., 2012, Meier et al., 2012, Maggs et al., 2015)



Higher rates of psychosis in adolescent consumers with a predisposition to schizophrenia (Moore et al., 2007)

Higher likelihood of cannabis dependence in adulthood (Schepis et al., 2008)

Unlike adults, adolescent use of cannabis is associated with more concurrent and long-term consequences on cognitive functioning than alcohol (Nutt et al., 2010, Morin et al., 2019)

How does cannabis legalization affect youth use?

International experience:

- There is little evidence that cannabis legalization promotes its use amongst adolescents (Anderson et al., 2019, Coley et al., 2021, Montgomery et al., 2022)
- Following the introduction of legal cannabis dispensaries in Colorado, USA, there was no significant impact on adolescent cannabis use; frequent cannabis use and use on school grounds actually decreased (Brooks-Russell et al., 2017)
- The pandemic also did not lead to increased cannabis use amongst adolescents in Canada (Leatherdale et al., 2021)
- Education and the reduction of stigma around cannabis use may help address mental health issues related to cannabis use after legalization (Wadsworth et al., 2020)

There is little evidence suggesting an increase in cannabis use amongst adolescents in North America since its legalisation

Youth protection

Challenges in ensuring the protection of minors

- Determination of an optimal age limit (too high → continuation of illicit market; too low → incentive to consume)
- Implementing evidence-based prevention and harm reduction programs
- Determination of suitable public spaces for consumption (Rolles & Murkin, 2016)

What measures have other countries taken to protect young people?



- Austria and Switzerland: CanReduce online self-help program for cannabis-using youth <https://www.canreduce.at>

- Switzerland and Germany: Ready4life social skills app for adolescents <http://www.ready4life.info>



- Denver (USA): Cannabis education campaign for youth "High Costs" <https://www.thehighcosts.com/about/>

- Colorado (USA): Purchasable cannabis education materials for various grade levels <https://marijuana-education.com>

- USA: Youth Marijuana Prevention and Education <https://www.crhweb.org/ympep>



- Canada: Sensitive Cannabis Education Toolkit <https://cssdp.org/uploads/2018/04/Sensible-Cannabis-Education-A-Toolkit-for-Educating-Youth.pdf>

- Canada: Toolkit for Parents and Teachers "REACH" (Real Education About Cannabis and Health) <https://words.usask.ca/cannabised4kids/>

- Canada: Cannabis Use and Youth: A Parent's Guide, HereToHelp BC <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/workbook/cannabis-use-and-youth-a-parents-guide>

- Canada: "Just Say Know", students for Sensible Drug Policy <https://ssdp.org/justsayknow/>

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