

Media Release

Cannabis Legal But Not Harmless

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Services de santé du

TIMISKAMING
Health Unit

Effective October 17, 2018, recreational cannabis use will be legal in Canada. In Ontario, persons 19 years and older will be legally permitted to purchase and possess up to 30 grams of cannabis for personal use. Initially, purchases will be limited to the Ontario Cannabis Store's on-line distribution system with privately-owned retail outlets planned to open in April 2019.

Despite being legal, cannabis is not harmless.

According to the Timiskaming Health Unit's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Monika Dutt, "The risks to our health depend upon the age of the user, level of THC present in the cannabis, frequency of use, method of use and the amount used."

Physical effects can include irritated respiratory system, increased appetite, increased heart rate, decreased blood pressure, poor memory, difficulty thinking, distorted perceptions, drowsiness, red eyes and dry mouth. Chronic use can lead to cannabinoid hyperemesis which involves severe nausea and vomiting. Cannabis use has been associated with an increased risk of depression and anxiety disorders.

Because the human brain continues to develop to around 25 years of age, cannabis use during adolescence and early adulthood can impair brain development and functioning. It is therefore best to delay using cannabis until later in life. Even occasional use during this period poses some risks. The younger a person starts to use a psychoactive substance, the more likely they are to develop a substance use problem later in life.

Avoiding cannabis is also recommended for persons who have a family history of mental illness or substance use issues as well as females who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Cannabis impairs judgement, coordination and reaction time. Driving or operating other machinery while impaired by cannabis is a criminal offence and carries the same penalties as driving while impaired by alcohol.

We can further reduce the harms of cannabis by:

- Creating public smoke-free zones
- Increasing smoke-free housing
- Keeping cannabis out the reach of children, youth and pets
- Role modeling appropriate behaviour

For those who choose to use cannabis, it is recommended that they follow Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines found at www.timiskaminghu.com

Media Contact:

Rachel Cote

Executive Assistant

705-647-4305, Ext. 2254

Email coter@timiskaminghu.com