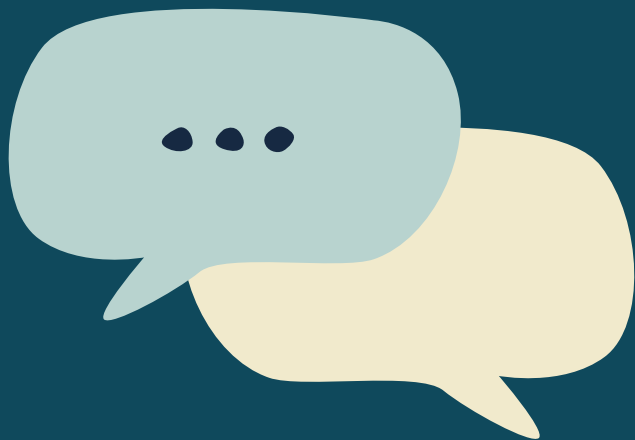


TALKING ABOUT CANNABIS (FOR PARENTS)

A Youth Prevention Toolkit



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Introduction

As a parent/guardian, you play a key role in preventing underage cannabis* use. Having early, age-appropriate conversations about cannabis creates a foundation for responsible decision making that will help your child make safe and healthy choices. Learning facts about cannabis and cannabis laws in Virginia will prepare you to have informed discussions with your child. This toolkit is designed to provide parents with useful information and resources to have those productive conversations.

**Although this toolkit primarily uses the word “cannabis,” the terms “cannabis” and “marijuana” are often used interchangeably.*



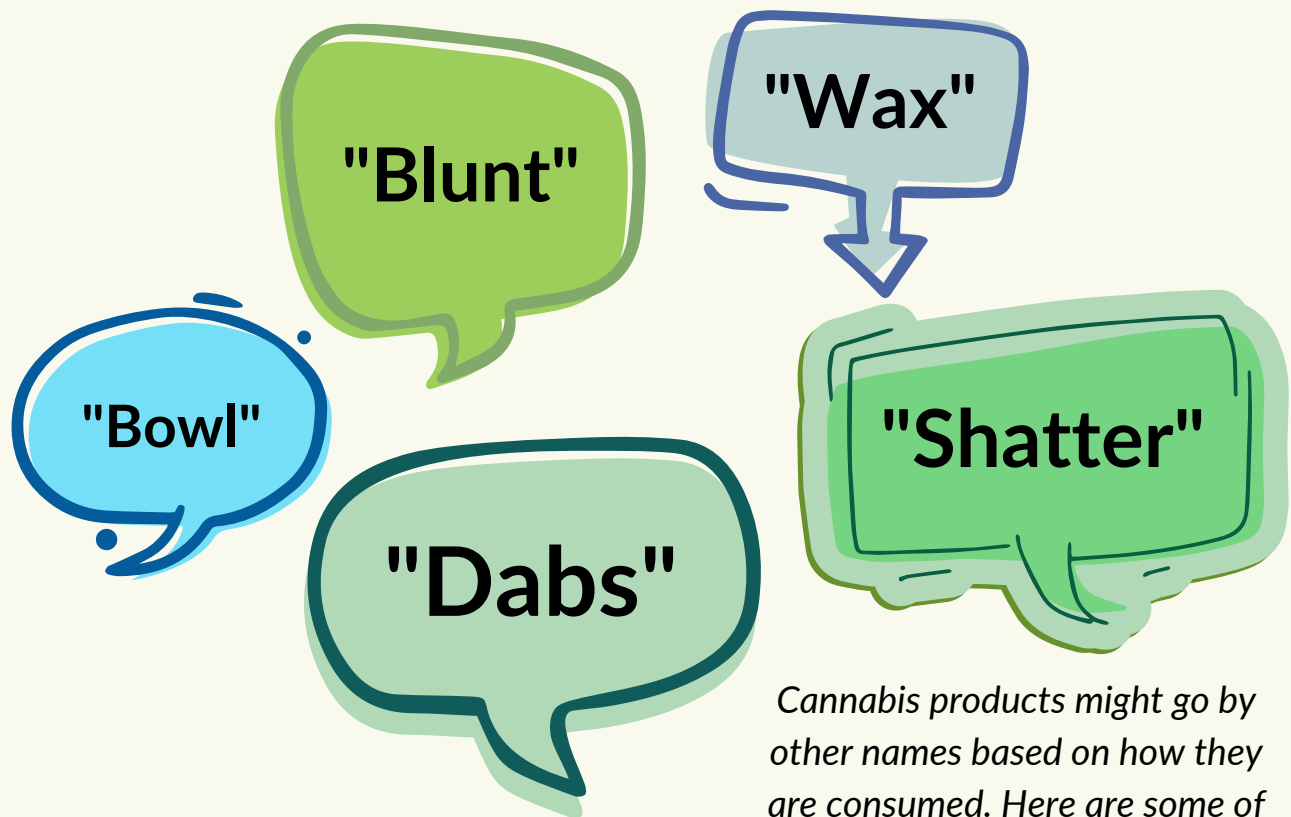
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Products Made from Cannabis

Cannabis is used as a term for many edible, inhalable, topical, or other kinds of products made from the cannabis plant. There are many slang terms for cannabis, including “bud,” “dope,” and “grass,” but these terms can change over time. Some commonly made cannabis products include candy, baked goods, vape pens, and tinctures.

Many different products come from the cannabis plant, not just those most commonly known as marijuana. CBD and products containing substances like Delta-8, Delta-10, and THC-O are appearing more frequently in Virginia.

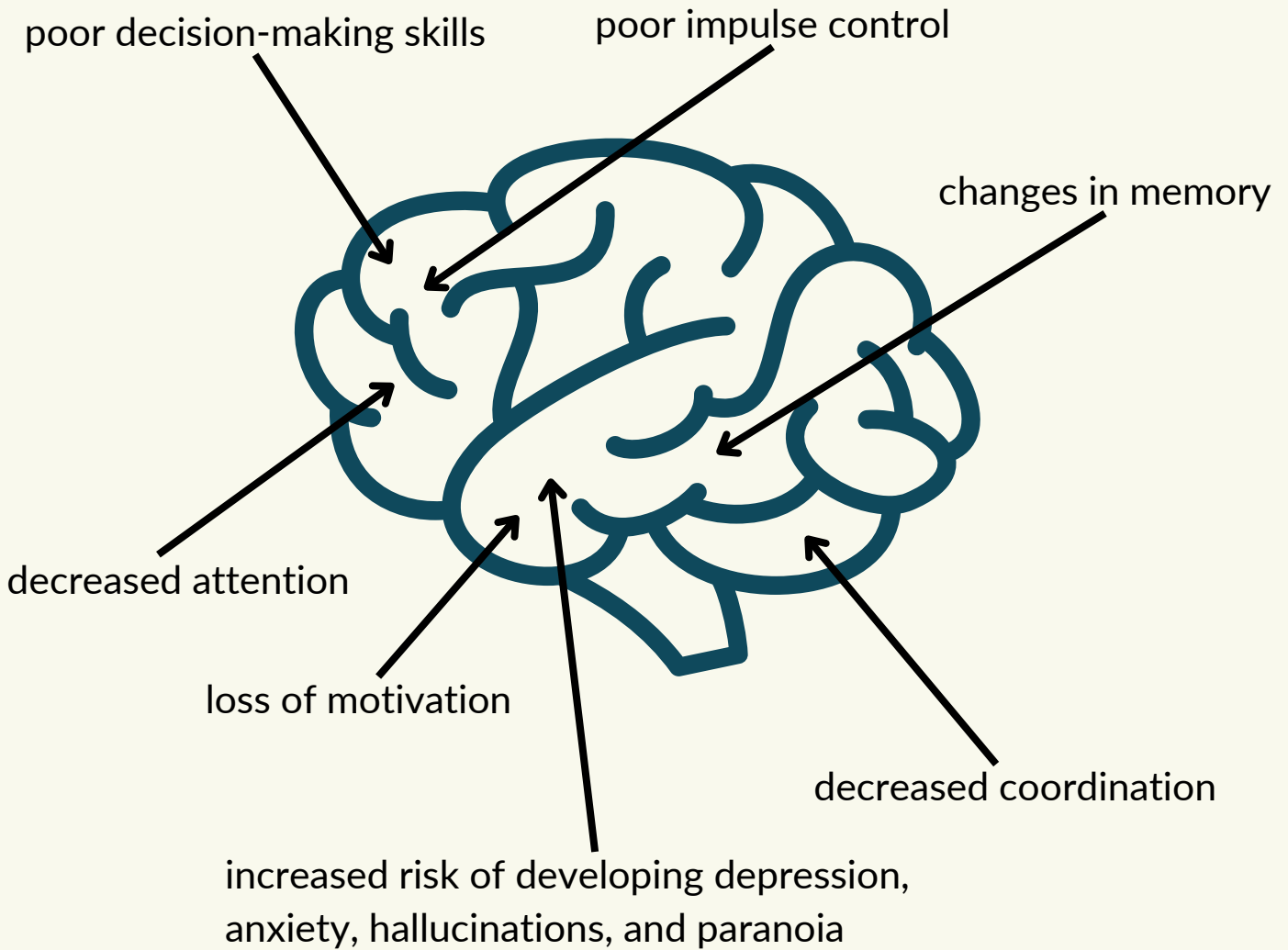


Cannabis products might go by other names based on how they are consumed. Here are some of the ones you might hear.

What is it called?	What can it look like?	What is it?
THC		<p>THC, or <i>tetrahydrocannabinol</i>, is the primary psychoactive component in cannabis. In most cases, people use THC to refer to delta-9 THC, which is the compound most people associate with the intoxicating effect of cannabis. Other types of THC can have similar effects. THC can also be extracted from cannabis, and products made with THC in its concentrated form can be strong.</p>
CBD		<p>CBD, or <i>cannabidiol</i>, is a compound in cannabis frequently used in topicals, oils, inhalants, and edibles. CBD is nonintoxicating when used in normal doses. Parents should consult a healthcare provider before determining if their child should use CBD products. Children should not use any CBD product unless under a parent's supervision, as it can have side effects like other over-the-counter drugs.</p>
Cannabinoid Hemp/ Delta-8		<p>Cannabinoid hemp products like Delta-8, Delta-10, and THC-O are usually made with extractions from legally grown hemp. Cannabinoid hemp products have been sold in convenience stores and vape shops and are often intoxicating. Like traditional cannabis products, it is not legal for those under 21 years of age to purchase or consume intoxicating hemp products in Virginia.</p>

Effects of Cannabis on the Developing Brain and Body

Cannabis use can negatively impact your child's brain development. Youth cannabis use has been linked with a number of brain development issues, including:



Children who use cannabis at an early age have a higher risk of developing an addiction to the substance and increase their risk of developing mental health issues such as schizophrenia. In addition to potential negative impacts on the brain, youth cannabis use has been linked to higher risks of many physical health problems, including lung issues, heart attacks, vomiting, and sleep issues, among others.



What's the Law?

In Virginia, it is illegal for people under 21 years of age to have or use cannabis. Those under 21-years-old who possess cannabis may face fines and/or be required to enter a substance abuse treatment program or an education program. Supplying cannabis to those under 21 years old is a criminal offense which can carry severe punishments, increasing in severity based on the amount provided. Driving under the influence of cannabis is a crime and is subject to the same penalties as any other form of DUI. There is no legal retail market for purchasing cannabis in Virginia.

Virginia has a regulated medical cannabis program accessible to qualifying patients. Patients must live in Virginia, be 18 years of age or older, have a valid government-issued identification, and have a condition that may benefit from the use of cannabis. Patients must obtain a written certification from a licensed practitioner before going to a licensed facility. Parents/legal guardians can get a written certification on behalf of a minor or vulnerable adult.



LET'S TALK

Starting the Conversation with Your Child About Cannabis

As a parent, you are one of the biggest influences on your child's life. By demonstrating healthy and safe decision making, your child will follow your lead and learn to develop responsible habits.

It is important to start talking to your child about cannabis early. Focus your discussions on the facts. For younger children, focus on what cannabis is, how cannabis is not safe for children, and that cannabis use by those under 21 is against the law. Include dialogue on being a leader, making positive choices, and identifying trusted adults. Clearly state that cannabis in any form is for adults, just as you would with other age-restricted products. With adolescents, your conversations can focus on more detailed facts, including the potential adverse health effects of underage cannabis use, potential life consequences of underage cannabis use, and skills to use in response to peer pressure. If someone your child knows uses medical cannabis, explain how medical cannabis is no different than other medications and should only be taken at a medical provider's direction and by the person who is directed to use it. By having age-appropriate conversations, you can help your child understand the risks of cannabis use.



Internet Safety

- Social media is a great way to connect with your child and learn about their interests. Make sure you know which social media services your child uses and monitor their activity.
- Exposure to cannabis ads is linked with higher rates of underage cannabis use. When your child uses the internet, they may be exposed to content containing cannabis and/or intoxicating cannabinoid hemp products.
- Other states may regulate intoxicating cannabinoid hemp products, like Delta-8, differently. Your child might be able to order these products online. Pay attention to any mail sent to your child and view the return address.

Tips for Talking to Your Child About Cannabis



Create opportunities for open, honest, and respectful conversations.



Provide clear and factual information.



Emphasize that your primary concerns are their health and safety.



Be prepared to listen and answer their questions.

Storing Cannabis Securely



Like other products that can be harmful to children, cannabis needs to be stored securely. Whether for medical or recreational purposes, cannabis in the home should be kept in a locked place to prevent access, such as a locked medicine cabinet or safe. If an adult 21 years of age or older chooses to use cannabis, they should monitor their supply and keep it in a protected location.

How Can I Tell if My Child is Using Cannabis?



Typical signs your child may show if they are using cannabis include:



Physical problems: bloodshot eyes, dry mouth, nagging cough



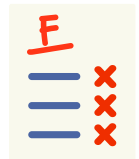
Mood changes: swings in temperament, defensiveness



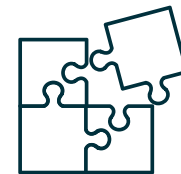
Changes in friend groups



Changes in appetite



Poor school performance: low grades, poor attendance



Increased isolation from friends and family



Paranoia or anxiety



Lack of motivation and/or loss of interest in activities that they used to find meaningful or enjoyable



Poor coordination and balance




Secretive behavior



If you suspect your child is using cannabis, remember to create a space for open dialogue and to discuss your concern for their health and safety.

Celebrations and Milestones

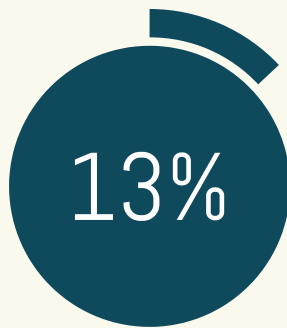


As your child takes on more independence, they will experience many events filled with anticipation, enthusiasm, and apprehension. Celebrations and milestones, such as attending school dances, learning to drive, graduating from high school, or starting college, can create new challenges. Plan ahead for these milestones by preparing your child to make healthy and safe decisions about cannabis. Inform your child of the legal restrictions and the risks of cannabis use, and ensure they feel confident in their ability to assess a risky situation. With strong parental guidance, your child will learn they can have fun while making responsible choices.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cannabis use can affect a person's ability to drive safely by slowing reaction time and impairing coordination, perception, and working memory.

You want your child to put safety first, so talk to them about the effects cannabis and other drugs can have on their ability to drive. Clearly communicate the law and establish rules for safe driving.



13% of high school students currently use cannabis, according to the 2021 Virginia Youth Survey.

1 in 25 middle school students have used cannabis at least once in their lifetime, according to the 2021 Virginia Youth Survey.

External Resources

[Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Association \(SAMHSA\) Parents Resources Library](#)

SAMHSA is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's "Talk. They Hear You." This campaign empowers parents and caregivers to talk with children early about substance use.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

The CDC is the nation's leading science-based, data-driven, service organization that protects public health. Their website contains information on cannabis' impact on youth, as well as tips on safely storing medications away from children.

[National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#)

The NIDA is the lead federal agency supporting scientific research on drug use and addiction. Their website contains information, in both scientific terms and plain language, on cannabis and its health effects.

[Virginia Poison Control Centers](#)

Virginia Poison Control Centers is a free, 24/7 emergency service that assists with suspected poisonings. This link provides contact information for the regional poison control centers in Virginia.

[Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth \(VFHY\) Unfazed Campaign](#)

The VFHY empowers Virginia's youth to make healthy choices by reducing and preventing youth tobacco and nicotine use, substance use, and childhood obesity. Their Unfazed Campaign is a resource directed towards youth for information about the risk of using cannabis as a teen.

CCA Resources

Find these resources and more at cca.virginia.gov.

Cannabis Laws in Virginia Fact Sheet

Learn about what is legal and illegal with cannabis use, home cultivation, and possession in Virginia. This document covers the topics of adult sharing, open container restrictions, legal consequences, and more.

Health Risks of Cannabis Consumption Informational Document

Cannabis use can negatively impact both physical and mental health. Learn more about how cannabis use impacts brain function and mood, risks cannabis use can pose to lung and heart health, and which populations are at greater risk.

Secondhand Smoke Exposure Fact Sheet

This document discusses how secondhand smoke can impact health. Learn more about how secondhand smoke affects youth and ways to reduce secondhand smoke exposure.

Risks and Consequences of Driving Under the Influence of Cannabis Fact Sheet

Learn more about the legal implications of driving under the influence of cannabis. This fact sheet covers information on how cannabis can impact driving, tips for planning a sober ride, and more.

Safe and Compliant Home Cultivation Guidance Document

This guidance document discusses safe and compliant home cultivation for individuals interested in cultivating cannabis plants in their residence.

Cannabis Use Disorder Fact Sheet

Learn more about cannabis use disorder (CUD). This fact sheet covers information on criteria used to diagnose CUD, as well as strategies to reduce cannabis use and resources for help.



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