

TALKING ABOUT CANNABIS (FOR YOUNG ADULTS)

A Responsible Use and Prevention Toolkit



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Introduction

Young adulthood is a time of change and opportunity. While some people may wait until they are at least 21 years old to use cannabis,* others may experiment earlier or avoid cannabis use altogether. No matter your decision, learning the facts about cannabis and cannabis laws in Virginia will enhance your ability to refrain from cannabis use or engage in responsible use among your social circles. This toolkit is designed to provide useful information and resources to help you make informed decisions on cannabis use.

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



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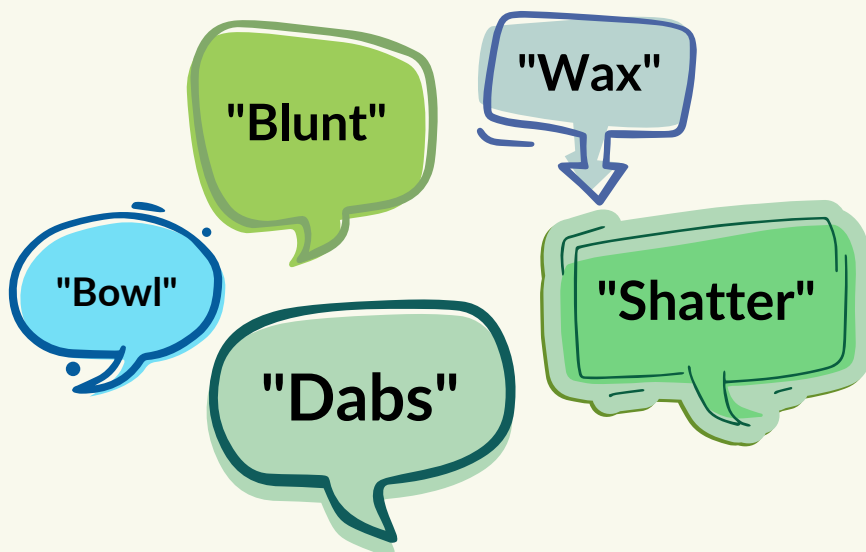
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Products Made from Cannabis

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 “weed,” “bud,” and “grass,” but these terms can change over time.

Cannabis can also be used to create many different products, including 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.

The potency of available cannabis products, in both medical and retail markets, has soared in the past two decades. Consuming more potent cannabis products can increase the likelihood of negative side effects. Physical, mental, or behavioral health problems may occur more frequently after using higher potency cannabis products.



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

Products Made From Cannabis (cont.)

What can cannabis products look like?

Cannabis comes in many forms and can be consumed using different methods. This is true regardless of what cannabinoid is used to manufacture the product or whether the product is intoxicating.



example of a tincture



example of a rolled flower joint



example of a vape pen

What cannabinoid does the product contain?

THC, or *tetrahydrocannabinol*, is the primary psychoactive component in cannabis. In most cases, people use THC to refer to Delta-9 THC. THC can also be extracted from cannabis, and products made with THC in its concentrated form can be strong.

CBD, or *cannabidiol*, is a frequently used compound derived from cannabis. CBD is nonintoxicating when used in normal doses and may be recommended to treat certain health issues. CBD can have negative side effects like other over-the-counter drugs, and you should consult with a healthcare provider before using.

Hemp-Derived Cannabinoids, such as Delta-8 and Delta-10, are usually made with extractions from legally grown hemp and are often intoxicating. In Virginia, it is illegal for those under 21 years of age to purchase or consume intoxicating hemp products as well as traditional cannabis products. Hemp-derived cannabinoids are regulated in Virginia by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Products made or shipped from other states may not be subject to testing or safety standards.



What's the Law?

In Virginia, it is legal for people 21 years of age and older to have or use cannabis in some circumstances. Public possession is limited to one ounce of cannabis or less. 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.

There is no legal way to buy or sell recreational cannabis in Virginia. This includes cannabis seeds and starts. “Pop-up shops,” or vendors that appear for a limited time or in a limited space to sell cannabis, are illegal.

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 dispensing facility.



What's the Law? (cont.)



Adults 21 years and older may share up to one ounce of cannabis privately, but there are restrictions. Sharing cannabis is legal only when nothing else of value is exchanged in the process. This includes cannabis seeds and starts.

Adults 21 years and older may legally cultivate up to four plants at home. Each plant must have a legible tag that includes the grower's name, driver's license or ID number, and a note indicating the plant is being grown for personal use as authorized by law. Cannabis plants must not be visible to the public. Anyone interested in cultivating cannabis should also make sure their landlord or homeowners association does not have additional rules that restrict the personal cultivation of cannabis.

Adult sharing does not include "gifting" schemes.

Transactions that include a "gift" of cannabis along with the sale of other goods or services are illegal. Examples of such schemes include:



- A vendor selling a small novelty item for money and "gifting" cannabis at the same time to the person who bought the novelty.
- Advertising that a "gift" of cannabis will be available at an event, such as a concert or farmer's market.
- Including a "gift" of cannabis as part of a paid class about cannabis home cultivation.

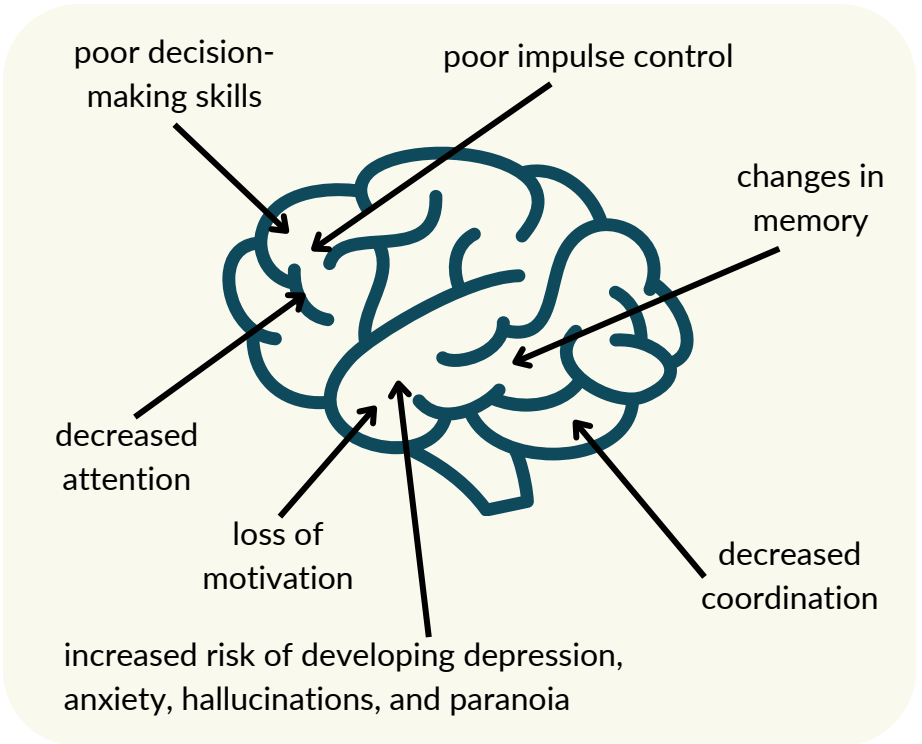
Cannabis in College

For those who choose to pursue a college education, the choices you make as a young adult can impact your options. Just as each state has its own rules on cannabis, so do colleges. Depending on the school, cannabis convictions and other penalties can negatively affect your chances of admission or continued attendance. Many colleges will deny or revoke scholarships and financial aid because of cannabis-related convictions.



Effects of Cannabis on the Brain and Body

Cannabis use can negatively impact your brain development. Because the frontal cortex of the brain is not fully developed until around age 25, young adults who use cannabis could experience a number of brain development issues, including poor decision-making skills, decreased impulse control, and loss of motivation. Adults who use cannabis at an early age



have a higher risk of developing mental health issues, such as schizophrenia. In addition to potential negative impacts on the brain, early cannabis use is linked to higher risks of many physical health problems, including lung issues, heart attacks, vomiting, and sleep issues, among others.

Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD)

You are at higher risk of developing an addiction to cannabis if you use cannabis at an early age. CUD is the inability to stop cannabis use despite its use potentially producing social or health-related harms. If you feel you are developing an unhealthy relationship with cannabis, try to reduce cannabis use with a gradual approach.

Strategies to reduce cannabis use include the following:



Create a plan to decrease your cannabis use.



Increase time between each use.



Engage in alternate activities.

How Much Is Too Much?



Whether you accidentally ingest cannabis, use too much at a party, or have developed an addiction to cannabis, it is important to learn what signs to look for and how to access necessary resources.

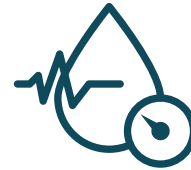
Symptoms you may feel if you use too much cannabis are similar to typical effects of cannabis use, but more severe. These symptoms may include:



Fast heart rate



Severe nausea or vomiting



Increased blood pressure



Paranoia or extreme anxiety



Hallucinations

If you or someone you know experiences any of the symptoms above, call the Virginia Poison Center's 24/7 hotline at (800) 222-1222 for expert help. Call 9-1-1 or visit an emergency room if symptoms are severe.

Bystander Intervention

An active bystander is a person who acts when witnessing someone in need of help. If you see someone in a high-risk situation, come up with a plan by using one or more of the following active bystander methods.

- 1 Directly ask the individual if they need help.
- 2 Delegate others to step in and help.
- 3 Create a distraction to safely interrupt the situation with the individual at risk.
- 4 Offer appropriate resources and help options to the individual at risk.

Responsible Cannabis Use

Individuals who are 21 years of age and older who wish to explore cannabis use should do so in a manner that protects personal well-being and public health and safety. Ways in which adults 21 and older can be responsible when using cannabis include the following:



Know the differences between product types.



Read product labels for serving size and total THC content.



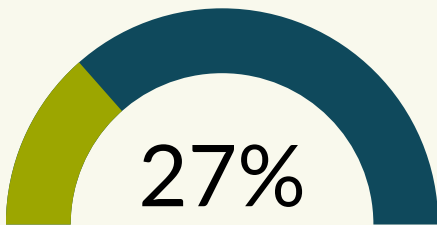
Consult a healthcare provider before using cannabis with alcohol, other drugs, or medications.



Do not use cannabis when pregnant or breastfeeding, around those under 21, in public, or while driving or intending to drive.



Use cannabis in moderation. "Start low, go slow."



27%
of people in Virginia ages 18-24 used cannabis one or more days in the past month, according to the 2022 Virginia Adult Health Survey.



In the U.S., **26%** of people ages 18-25 used cannabis in the past month, according to the 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health survey.

Safe and Sober Driving

Did you know using even a small amount of cannabis can negatively alter brain function and a person's ability to drive safely?

If you are going to use cannabis and get high:

Find a sober ride.



Consume at home.

Walk home after consuming.



Call a rideshare service.

Encourage friends and family to make responsible driving choices.

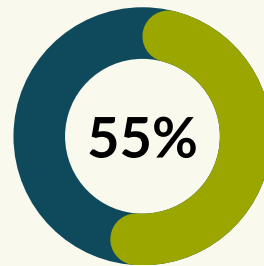


Wait it out.

It is illegal to use or consume cannabis while driving or while being a passenger in a motor vehicle. It is also illegal to drive under the influence of cannabis. Driving under the influence of cannabis can result in up to one year in jail and/or a fine of up to \$2,500, with a mandatory fine of \$250.



In Virginia, **17%** of cannabis users ages 18-24 say they rarely or never have a sober drive home after consuming cannabis, according to the CCA's 2022 safe driving survey.



55% of past year 18-24 cannabis users in Virginia have driven under the influence of cannabis, according to the CCA's 2022 safe driving survey.

Travel and Mail Safety

While simple possession of cannabis is legal in limited situations in Virginia, cannabis possession remains a crime at the federal level. Federal law applies to all offenses committed on federal land, including national parks and air space.

Cannabis laws also differ from state to state. Part of responsible cannabis use includes maintaining an awareness of federal and state laws when traveling.

It is federally illegal to mail or receive by mail cannabis products that contain more than 0.3% Delta-9 THC.



It is also federally illegal to fly with cannabis products that contain more than 0.3% Delta-9 THC. Both the United States Postal Service and the Travel Security Administration (TSA) are subject to these federal laws and may conduct searches of mailed items or luggage.

Storing Cannabis Securely



Like other products with intoxicating properties, cannabis needs to be stored securely. Whether kept for medical or recreational purposes, cannabis in a private residence should be kept in a locked place to prevent access, such as a locked medicine cabinet or safe. If you are an adult 21 years of age or older and choose to use cannabis, monitor your supply and keep it in a protected location.

External Resources

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

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. This page includes information on risks of cannabis use and other topics.

[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.

[Safe Party Initiative Cannabis Resource Page](#)

The Safe Party Initiative is a collaboration between the City of Davis and the University of California, Davis supported by the Prevention Research Center, with funding from the National Institutes for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. While cannabis laws in California differ from Virginia, this page contains helpful tips for harm reduction while using cannabis and participating in social events.

[National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#)

The NHTSA is a division of the United States Department of Transportation that promotes driver safety. This page contains additional information about the dangers of drug impaired driving.

[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.

CCA Resources

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

Cannabis Laws in Virginia Factsheet

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.

Risks and Consequences of Driving Under the Influence of Cannabis Factsheet

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.

Pop-Up Shops Factsheet

“Pop-up” cannabis shops in Virginia are illegal. Learn more about the law in Virginia and examples of what might constitute a “pop-up” shop.

Cannabis Use Disorder Factsheet

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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