



Talking with Your Clients **HIGHER RISK CLIENTS**

Youth and Young Adults under 25, and Individuals at Risk or Living with Mental Illness or Addiction

KEY TALKING POINTS AND RESOURCES TO HELP YOU IN CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CLIENTS

Visit wechu.org/cannabis for more information and to download and print the key resources. The site also provides on-screen translation and read aloud feature in over 100 languages.

GENERAL TALKING POINTS

- Legal doesn't mean safe. Just like alcohol or tobacco, cannabis has effects on the brain and body.
- You should NEVER use cannabis if you have a history of mental illness or addiction, are under 25, or if pregnant or breastfeeding because you are more at risk of harm than others.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS UNDER 25

Tips for Talking to Youth

- Know the facts – be a source of credible information and provide facts, not opinions.

- Create a safe, comfortable space to talk – be open-minded and non-judgmental.
- Be an active listener – talk regularly, ask open-ended questions, repeat what they said to make sure you heard it right and validate their feelings.
- Be a source of support – ask if they have any other concerns going on in their life.

Key Messages for Youth

- Cannabis is a legal substance for those 19+. Like tobacco or alcohol, legal does not mean safe.
- Using any drug at a young age can be harmful because your brain is still developing (until around age 25). The THC in cannabis affects the same areas of the brain that control development.

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- Using cannabis under the age of 25 has a greater risk of long-term or permanent effects on:
 - mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety, psychotic disorders, addiction),
 - brain function (e.g., learning, memory, problem solving skills), and
 - lungs and respiratory system (from smoking).
- Cannabis use can affect how well you do in school and make it harder to achieve your goals.
- It can also affect your physical health and ability to be active and play sports because it can cause problems with breathing, coordination, and reflexes.
- Some people use cannabis for medical reasons, but this should always be discussed and prescribed by a healthcare professional just like with any other medication.
- There is a greater risk of mental illness and developing psychosis and schizophrenia with use at a young age (especially under 16 years old), heavy or daily use, and use of products high in THC.

Key Resources: *Is Cannabis Harmful to My Health? (WECHU, 2018)*, *Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines brochure (CAMH, 2018)*, and *10 Ways to Reduce Risks When Using Cannabis poster and postcard (CAMH, 2018)*

Key Resource: *Cannabis Talk Kit (Drug Free Kids Canada, 2018)*. Order free printed copies from www.drugfreekidscanada.org

INDIVIDUALS AT RISK OR LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS OR ADDICTION

- Individuals at risk or living with mental illness should not use cannabis as it can cause or worsen existing mental illness (i.e. depression, anxiety) or addiction.
- Individuals with a history of addiction are at a higher risk of addiction to cannabis and should not use cannabis.
- Having a personal or family history of mental illness and using cannabis increases your risk of schizophrenia, psychotic disorders or psychotic episodes (e.g., hallucinations, hearing/seeing things that don't exist).

GETTING HELP WITH SUBSTANCE USE

Urgent help

- Windsor-Essex Crisis Line: 519-973-4435 (24 hour/7 days a week)
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 www.kidshelpphone.ca (phone or online chat counselling for children and youth, English and French)
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454 www.good2talk.ca (24/7 confidential helpline for counselling and referrals for mental health, addictions, and wellbeing to postsecondary students)
- If unintentional ingestion or bad reaction, call 911 or the Ontario Poison Centre: 1-800-268-9017

Find local treatment services

- Visit www.wechu.org/GetHelp: Directory of helplines and local treatment services for mental health and addictions. Can download and print a Treatment Options Brochure from this page
- Call Connex Ontario: 1-866-531-2600 www.connexontario.ca (24/7 support in 100+ languages)

References available on our website wechu.org