

How To Safely Use Methods of Cannabis Consumption

Adjust the way you use cannabis. One of the great aspects of cannabis is that there are many ways to use the medicine effectively.

Ingest via Eating

This is one of the safest ways to consume your medication, but understand that the effects from eaten cannabis may be more pronounced and onset of the effects will be delayed by an hour or more and typically last longer than inhalation. Using edible cannabis effectively will usually take some experimentation with particular product types and dosage. Digesting cannabis also metabolizes the cannabinoids somewhat differently and can produce different subjective effects, depending on the individual.

Use small amounts of edibles and wait 2 hours before gradually increasing the dose, if needed. Take care to find and use the right dose-excessive dosage can be uncomfortable and happens most often with edibles.

Try cannabis pills made with hash or cannabis oil or ingest via Tinctures/Sprays

Find your ideal dosage to enhance your therapeutic benefits. Start with no more than two drops and wait at least an hour before increasing the dosage, incrementally and as necessary.

Apply via Topicals

This is one of the safest ways to consume your medication and may be the best option for certain pains or ailments. Rubbing cannabis products on the skin will not result in a psychoactive effect.

Inhale via Smoking

Because the effects are noticed or felt quickly, this is a good way to get immediate relief and find the best dose for you. Research has shown that smoking cannabis does not increase your risk of lung or other cancers, but because it entails inhaling tars and other potential irritants, it may produce unpleasant bronchial effects such as harsh coughing.

Smoke as little as possible. Try 1 to 3 inhalations and wait 10 to 15 minutes to find the right dosage. Increase dosage as necessary.

Take smaller, shallower inhalations rather than deep inhales. Holding smoke in does not increase the effects; studies show that 95% of the THC is absorbed in the first few seconds of inhaling.

If consuming with others, for health reasons, try not to share the smoking device. If sharing, quickly apply flame to the pipe mouthpiece or wipe with rubbing alcohol to kill germs.

To avoid inhaling unnecessary chemicals, use hemp paper coated with beeswax to light your medicine rather than matches or a lighter.

Inhale via Vaporizer

This is the safest way to inhale your medicine because it heats the cannabinoid-laden oils to the point where they become airborne vapors, without bringing the other plant material to combustion, drastically reducing the amount of tars and other chemical irritants that you otherwise would inhale. Vaporizers also emit much less odor than any type of smoking.

Invest in a tabletop Volcano brand vaporizer or a hand-held vaporizer (such as vaporPlus). Construct your own vaporizer if you can't afford to buy one.

Inhale via a Pipe/One-Hitter/Steam Roller

Use a glass, stainless steel, or brass pipe; avoid wood or plastic pipes. Glass one hitters, tubular pipes that contain a single dose, are the most economical devices.

Inhale via a Bong/Water Pipe

Don't use a bong or water pipe regularly. The water absorbs some of the THC and other cannabinoids, and you can inhale water vapor or water drops into your lungs.

Don't use a bong made from plastic, rubber or aluminum that can produce harmful fumes when heated or melted. If you do use one, change the water frequently to limit exposure to germs and viruses.

Know Your Variety

Cannabis comes in many varieties, roughly divided between Sativas that originated near the equator and Indicas that come from northern latitudes, though modern breeding programs have created a wide range of hybrids. Each variety has its own cannabinoid and terpene profile and subtly different effects. Whether you use Sativa-dominant, Indica-dominant, or a Hybrid it makes a difference.

1. Take note of what effect each variety produce for you (therapeutic and side effects); keeping a log can be helpful.
2. Use higher potency cannabis so you use less medicine. Concentrates can be useful, particularly if you need higher doses.
3. For concentrates, use a glass pipe made for cannabis concentrates.
4. Experiment with high CBD strains, particularly for nausea, appetite, and pain.
5. Take a medicine vacation occasionally. While cannabis does not produce tolerance in the way opiates do, reducing or ceasing cannabis use can yield enhanced effects when restarted. Either reduce or stop for however long it feels comfortable for you.
6. Change the variety if the one you're using seems to be losing its effectiveness.
7. Whenever possible, choose organic cannabis products. Never consume cannabis that has been treated with pesticides.

Think About Drug Interactions

No significant interactions between cannabis and other drugs are known at this time, though research indicates cannabis enhances the effects of opiate painkillers. Little is known about the interaction of cannabis and other pharmaceutical medications, but it is important to consider any complementary effects.

Talk to your doctor or find a doctor who you can talk to about medical cannabis. Some studies show interactions with barbiturates, theophylline, fluoxetine, disulfiram, sedatives, antihistamines, etc.

A synergistic effect can occur with alcohol use; limit mixing the two.

Consider Safety. For yourself and your community.

Indicas can cause drowsiness-avoid driving or operating heavy machinery when using your medicine.

Don't consume cannabis and drive. Cannabis use can impair motor skills. Find a safe environment to consume your medicine. Wait at least 1-2 hours after you medicate before getting behind the wheel.

Managing medicine costs

If paying for your medicine is an issue, try a few of these tips.

1. Track your costs to get an accurate picture of your spending on cannabis.
2. Take a “grow your own” class and explore growing your own medicine or work with a small group of patient cultivators.
3. If you access your medicine through a dispensary, use discount cards or investigate other ways to receive free or discounted medicine (like a low-income program, sliding scale program, activism volunteer)
4. Store your medicine properly to maintain quality over time. Airtight glass jars kept in a cool dark space work best.

Keeping a Cannabis Log

To establish an optimal treatment regime with cannabis, you will need to balance the effects of different strains, doses, and methods of ingestion. It may be helpful to record your therapeutic relationship with cannabis on an ongoing basis. One method is through keeping a cannabis-use log that captures your experience, including thoughts, feeling and behaviors. Periodically reviewing the log can help both you and your doctor make decisions about what works best.

To start, keep a detailed log, as described below, for at least one week. Once you've got a week's worth of information, complete the self-assessment worksheet that follows. This worksheet will help you better understand many things about yourself, including: your ailments and symptom patterns, your treatment behaviors, and the efficacy and side effects of the cannabis medicines you use.

In keeping a medication log, try to keep things standardized, and be as consistent as possible. Here are some logging tips on useful information to collect:

1. Date/Time: Record every time you consume cannabis with the current date and time of day.
2. Amount: The amount of cannabis used (gram estimate or other consistent measure).
3. Strain: The name, strain or variety of the cannabis strain or variety of cannabis medicine used. If you don't know the name, write a detailed description of the medicine.
4. Code: Strains are generally described as Indica, Sativa, or hybrid. You may want to code your entries: I=Indica, S=Sativa, S/I=Sativa-dominant Indica Cross, and I/S= Indica-dominant Sativa Cross.
5. Type is the form of cannabis consumed: dried bud flower (most common), concentrates, tincture/sprays, edibles/drinks or topical. You may want to use: F=flower, C=concentrate, T=tincture/spray, E=edible, TO=topical.
6. Cannabinoid Content: refers to the percent of THC, CBD and/or CBN. If you have this information available to you, write down percentages of each cannabinoid. If you're using edibles or similar, a description of potency and preparation is helpful.
7. Mode: Write down how you used your medication. Either inhale via S=smoke or V=vaporize, E=eat/digest, T=tincture or spray, TO=topical.
8. Therapeutic Effects: List any positive effects you experience (physical, mental, social, behavioral, etc).
9. Negative Side Effects: List your negative effects
10. Timing: How quickly did you experience the first therapeutic effects? When did you feel the peak of relief? When did it start to noticeably dissipate? How long until effects were gone?
11. What prompted your cannabis use? List the specific factors that told you it was time for medicine, as well as the general symptoms or conditions being treated (e.g. pain, nausea, anxiety, etc.

12. How did you feel (mindset)? Record your mood and feelings before and after you used cannabis.
 13. Where were you (setting)? Were you at home, at a collective, in your office? Sitting, standing, lying down?
 14. Who were you with? Were you by yourself, with a friend, a large group, among other cannabis consumers, etc?
 15. What were you doing? Just before you used cannabis, what was going on? What were the activities or circumstances leading up to it?
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