



WHEN DISCUSSING CANNABIS*:

- Consider your own biases
- Keep the dialogue open and neutral
- Stick to the facts

51% of surveyed older adults have talked to their healthcare provider about cannabis¹

Optimizing Communication with Older Adults About Cannabis

COMMUNICATE OPENLY, WITHOUT STIGMA

Communicating openly, without stigma, is paramount to patient-centered care.

During clinical encounters with older adults, routinely inquire about cannabis use, as you would activity level, exercise, and alcohol use. This **normalizes** the conversation about cannabis use.

Talking about cannabis will help to:

- Encourage patients to make decisions based on credible information
- Signal your openness to talk about cannabis
- Support an open and trusting relationship

OPTIMIZE COMMUNICATION WITH OLDER PATIENTS²

(Adapt based on individual patient needs)



Visual

- Ensure older patients are wearing their eyeglasses
- Ask older patients when they last had a vision exam
- Ensure good lighting
- Sit facing each other
- If using printed material ensure high contrast and large font



Caregiver support

- Family members and caregivers may play an important role and may act as a facilitator, translator and/or supporter
- Protect and honor patient privacy: ensure you understand the nature of the relationship between the patient and their family member/caregiver



Auditory

- Ask if patient has a working hearing aid
- Make use of hearing amplifier (if available and patient is agreeable)
- Ask older patients when they last had a hearing exam
- Sit facing each other to facilitate lip reading
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Avoid using high-pitched voice
- Minimize background noise



Optimize language

- Avoid using jargon, use plain language
- Determine if translation is required
- Some older patients may use and be more familiar with the term marijuana or weed – adopt their terminology



Ensure understanding

- Provide opportunities to ask questions, and ask whether clarification is needed
- Use the teach-back technique, ask older adult patients to repeat instructions
- Provide a written summary, or allow recording of the discussion

1. CCSMH Cannabis and Older Adults Needs Assessment Survey, Fall 2020

2. National Institute on Aging. *Talking with Your Older Patient: A Clinician's Handbook*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Aging; 2011.

