



ROUTINELY ASK OLDER PATIENTS ABOUT CANNABIS*

Do you routinely ask older patients if they are taking cannabis? Asking about cannabis can support safer cannabis use among older adults.

Clinician Strategies for Safer Cannabis Use Among Older Adults

Clinician strategies for safer use:

- Consider all suitable drug and lifestyle therapies before recommending cannabis
- Initiate cannabis as a 3-month trial
- Document cannabis use on your EMR
- Assess risk of dependency and monitor for Cannabis Use Disorder
- Sign a treatment agreement with older patients, if required by jurisdiction
- Monitor for potential benefits and adverse effects
- Promote safer strategies with older adult patients (*see below*)

HOW TO PROMOTE SAFER STRATEGIES

Promote safer strategies with older adult patients¹:

- ✓ Encourage open communication with all healthcare providers regarding cannabis use
- ✓ Purchase regulated products from a licensed source
- ✓ Avoid inhaled (including vaping) products
- ✓ Avoid driving after consuming cannabis (particularly with high THC levels)
- ✓ Be with a trusted friend or family member the first few times using cannabis
- ✓ Read labels carefully and wait to feel the effects before taking more
- ✓ Start at a low dose, and choose products with no more than 100mg/g (10%) THC
- ✓ Ensure that cannabis products are stored securely to protect vulnerable populations
- ✓ Avoid cannabis if they have a personal or family history of psychosis

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR OLDER ADULTS



Driving

Cannabis use can result in impaired:

- Time, depth and speed perception
- Reaction times and motor coordination
- Concentration and decision making, short-term memory

Older adults should avoid operating a motor vehicle after consuming cannabis. Driving while impaired is illegal.



Polypharmacy / Polysubstance

Cannabis may enhance or suppress the concentrations and effects of other medications and substances.

This may be of concern for older adults who tend to take more prescriptions and other substances.

The use of cannabis and alcohol together can result in a synergistic effect and should be avoided.



Falls

Cannabis use in older adults may impair balance, gait, and increase risk of falls.



Storage and Disposal

Older adults or caregivers should ensure cannabis is stored and disposed of safely, similar to pharmaceutical medications. In particular, edibles that can be confused with regular gummies, brownies or teas should be stored safely to protect vulnerable groups (e.g., children and cognitively impaired older adults).



Travel

While medical and non-medical cannabis is legal in Canada, it is still illegal in numerous countries. Encourage your patients to research laws and restrictions of their travel destination and discuss whether cannabis is a good option for frequent travellers.

Older adults should be aware that they might experience withdrawal symptoms if they abruptly stop cannabis prior to travelling.

1. *Canadian Guidelines for Cannabis Use Disorder Among Older Adults*, Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health, Toronto, Canada (2019)
https://ccsmh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Cannabis_Use_Disorder_ENG_WEB_Jan-21.pdf