



## Modes of Cannabis Use

### CONSIDERATIONS

Medical cannabis products come in many forms and modes of use.

There are numerous considerations when selecting the ideal mode of cannabis including;

- Speed of onset and length of effect
- Flexibility with dosing
- Ease of use
- Living arrangements (e.g., smoke free policies)
- Costs

Encourage all patients to access cannabis through regulated producers/sellers.

### MODES OF USE

#### ORO-MUCOSAL<sup>1</sup>



- Includes tinctures, oils and sprays
- Absorbed via the lining of the mouth or under the tongue
- Start of effect: 15 - 60 minutes
- Length of effect: 2 - 3 hours

#### PROS

- Easier to control dosage, e.g., THC and CBD content
- Onset is usually faster than with edibles
- Discrete and easy to carry
- Wide variety and range of cannabinoid and terpene ratios available

#### CONS

- Poor taste reported by some
- Patient must adhere to administration instructions in order to allow for proper absorption, e.g., not swallow immediately
- Adverse effects may include oral stinging and white lesions from long-term use

#### INGESTION



- Includes edibles such as baked products, gummies, chocolate, candies, beverages and pills/capsules.
- Cannabis oil taken with food can also be ingested
- These products are infused with cannabis extracts or individual cannabinoids
- Edible cannabis products are legally limited to 10 mg of THC (max)
- Start of effect: 30 minutes - 2 hours
- Length of effect: Peak at 4 hours and can last 12 hours

- Edibles provide a smoke-free, discrete alternative
- Wide variety of flavours and textures are available

- Takes longer to take effect
- Products can be expensive
- Safety:
  - Vulnerable populations may not recognize that the edible contains cannabis
  - Risk of ingesting too much while waiting for the effect to begin
  - Need to read product labels regarding storage, expiry dates, mixing instructions, etc.
  - Cannabinoid content can be unevenly distributed particularly in homemade products

#### INHALATION



- When cannabis flowers, leaves, or extracts are heated via smoking or vaporizing, cannabinoids such as THC and CBD are released
- Inhaled cannabis is not recommended for older adults.
- Start of effect: Seconds - a few minutes
- Length of effect: Up to 6 hours

- Quick start of effect
- Typically less expensive than more processed products

#### Vaporizer or G-pen:

- More discrete (odours can be minimized)
- Wider variety of flavours available
- More efficient extraction of THC and CBD
- Less toxic byproducts

- May decrease older adult's lung health, particularly for people with COPD, asthma, and emphysema.
- Dosing may be unpredictable because the amount of cannabinoid delivered from inhaled cannabis varies based on:
  - The depth of inhale
  - Puff duration and breath hold
- Difficult to conceal the odour in public or shared accommodation setting
- Smoke free policies may restrict use
- Vaporizer or G-pen:
  - May be more expensive than dried cannabis
  - May still cause lung damage

#### TOPICALS



- Includes cannabis-infused transdermal lotions, serums, creams, etc. applied externally, on skin, hair and nails
- Generally offer only localized effects
- Start and length of effect not currently reported in scientific literature.

- Products are discrete; they can be odourless and absorb quickly
- May target localized pain
- No psychoactive effect

- Despite an abundance of anecdotal evidence, the efficacy of topicals is yet to be determined due to lack of scientific evidence<sup>2</sup>
- Tend to be more expensive than traditional over the counter lotions
- Adverse effects could include skin irritation

1. Gabrys R. Clearing the Smoke on Cannabis: Edible Cannabis Products, Cannabis Extracts and Cannabis Topicals. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction; 2020. <https://bit.ly/3DhahSU>  
2. Canada H. For health care professionals: Cannabis and cannabinoids. www.canada.ca. Published October 12, 2018. Accessed September 15, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3QzUyRR>

