



Consumers Can Help Prevent
Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

Volume 15 • Issue 11 • November 6, 2024

Cannabis Safety in Older Adults

Cannabis poisonings can occur, regardless of whether ingestion is accidental or intentional. Relative to younger adults, older adults may be at higher risk of cannabis side effects and poisoning, for several reasons:

- They may be more sensitive to the effects of cannabis.
- They may take medications that interact with cannabis.
- They may have medical conditions that could be affected by cannabis.



[Mederror.ca](#) learned about an older adult who went to the emergency department feeling very sick. The cause was unclear until cannabis was found in their lab test results. The person had mistakenly eaten a cannabis edible that belonged to a family member. As a result, the person experienced cannabis poisoning, which could have caused serious harm if left untreated.

Mederror.ca shares the following tips to reduce the risk of cannabis poisoning:

- Store cannabis products, including edibles, locked away and out of sight. Store these products away from food and drinks, to avoid mix-ups.
- If someone becomes unwell in a household where cannabis might be present, look for symptoms of cannabis poisoning. These symptoms can include dizziness or feeling faint, faster heart rate (as well as increased risk of a heart attack), and severe anxiety.
 - If you suspect poisoning, call 1-800-POISON-X (1-800-463-5060 in Quebec) or 911.
- If you choose to use cannabis, take the following precautions:
 - Speak to your doctor or pharmacist first. Some medical conditions and medications can make cannabis less safe to use.
 - Buy cannabis products only from authorized retailers. Look for these features of legal cannabis products: [How to read and understand a cannabis product label - Canada.ca](#).
 - Start low and go slow when using cannabis, and monitor the effects closely. Let your health care provider know if you have any side effects. They can also be reported to Health Canada [here](#).
 - Avoid consuming cannabis alone. Let a trusted friend know what you are doing, to help keep you safe.

For more information about safe cannabis use, read [Health effects of cannabis on adults over 55](#).

This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and [Patients for Patient Safety Canada](#).

Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together.

This newsletter shares information about safe medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation.

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