

Frequently Asked Questions

Cannabis at the U of A



The legalization of cannabis in Canada on October 17 will represent a significant change in how Canadians talk about, view, and use cannabis. What does legalization mean for each of us as members of the U of A community? What are the effects of cannabis? What do I need to know to be informed? This FAQ is intended to answer some of your questions and ensure that you have the available information about cannabis use on campus.

Please note that this resource has been developed using information and recommendations provided by Alberta Health Services and Health Canada. Please see the reverse for supporting website links.

What is Cannabis?

Cannabis is the general term used to describe marijuana, hashish, and hashish oil. Other common terms include: pot, weed, ganja, kief, and reefers. Each of these substances is derived from the hemp plant, *cannabis sativa*, which grows in almost any climate. All three forms contain delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is the major psychoactive chemical in cannabis products. The chemical components in cannabis are referred to as cannabinoids.

What is the difference between cannabis and synthetic cannabinoids?

According to Alberta Health Services (AHS), synthetic cannabinoids are sold over the counter and via the internet as herbal incense products. They often come in the form of dried leaves, resin, or smokable powders and are commonly abused for their psychoactive properties. Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals that cause similar effects to the psychoactive chemicals found naturally in the cannabis plant. While they are often referred to as “fake weed,” in reality they can have very different effects from cannabis and may have a potency 28 times greater than the active ingredients (such as tetrahydrocannabinol or cannabidiol) in cannabis.

Synthetic cannabinoids will not be included in Canada’s legalization of cannabis and will remain illegal.

What is THC?

According to Health Canada, the most researched cannabinoid is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is responsible for the way your brain and body respond to cannabis, including the high and intoxication. THC has some therapeutic effects but it also has harmful effects. Harmful effects may be greater when the strength of THC is higher. The potency (concentration or strength) of THC in cannabis is often shown as a percentage of THC by weight (or by volume of an oil). THC potency in dried cannabis has increased from an average of 3% in the 1980s to around 15% today. Some strains can have an average as high as 30% THC.

Cannabis that contains very low amounts of THC in its flowers and leaves (less than 0.3%) is classified as hemp.

How long does it take for cannabis to begin affecting me?

The effects of smoking cannabis are felt within a few minutes, take about one hour to fully develop, and last two to four hours; however, performance of complex tasks may be impaired for as long as 24 hours. When cannabis is eaten, the effects appear more gradually, last longer and are more difficult for the user to anticipate, as the dosage taken is harder to control once ingested. Low levels of cannabinoids can remain in the body for several days even after a single dose.

What are the health risks of using cannabis?

According to Canada’s Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines, there is strong evidence that cannabis use is associated with a variety of health risks. The risks depend on your constitution, which kinds of cannabis products you use, and how or how often you use them. Some of the main health risks are:

- Problems with thinking, memory or physical coordination
- Impaired perceptions or hallucinations
- Fatal and non-fatal injuries, including those from

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- motor-vehicle accidents, due to impairment
- Mental health problems and cannabis dependence
- Chronic respiratory or lung problems
- Reproductive problems

How old do I have to be to possess and use cannabis in Alberta?

In Alberta, the minimum age for possessing and using cannabis is 18 years, which is aligned with the legal age of drinking and smoking.

Can I use cannabis on campus?

The U of A will designate a small number of cannabis smoking and vaping zones on our properties where cannabis may be consumed. Guidelines are currently being developed to address the consumption of cannabis at large-scale social events.

In Alberta, smoking and vaping of cannabis will be restricted in areas frequented by kids and other public spaces where smoking is prohibited.

What about consuming cannabis in my vehicle?

Cannabis consumption will not be allowed in vehicles. Penalties will be the same as alcohol-impaired driving.

What will happen if I am impaired on campus and/or while working on campus?

The *Code of Student Behaviour* already addresses behaviour and expectations for student members of our community. The U of A's Human Resource Services is currently drafting an impairment policy that will align with provincial regulations and will address all forms of impairment in the campus workplace.

Can I grow and use cannabis in U of A residences?

No. All cannabis growing and recreational consumption will be prohibited in U of A-owned residences.

How much cannabis am I allowed to possess?

Adults can possess up to 30 grams of legally-grown cannabis. Those under 18 cannot possess, purchase, or use cannabis.

Will the sale of cannabis be allowed on campus?

No. The sale of cannabis and accessories will not be permitted in university-owned spaces on campus.

To learn more about the legalization of Cannabis in Alberta and cannabis on campus, please visit the following sites:

The Alberta Cannabis Framework and Legislation | www.alberta.ca/cannabis-framework

U of A's Policies and Guidelines | www.ualberta.ca/campus-life/cannabis-working-group

Government of Canada Cannabis Legalization | www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis/canadians.html

Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdfs---reports-and-books---research/canadas-lower-risk-guidelines-cannabis-pdf.pdf