

Edible cannabis and youth

Updated: January 26, 2023

Cannabis is a plant that contains a chemical called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is what gives you a “high.” Cannabis can be smoked, vaped, or consumed as edibles. Edibles are products made with cannabis that you can eat or drink. Edibles often resemble food products such as cookies, chocolate, gummy candy, and beverages.

Cannabis in Minnesota

In 2022, Minnesota legalized the sale of certain edible cannabis products made from hemp to adults 21 years or older. Although hemp is not as strong as other cannabis plants, the THC derived from hemp can still give you a high. People may have access to other cannabis products with more THC from the unregulated market or from other states.

Public health concerns for youth who use cannabis

- Cannabis dependence increases when someone starts using at an early age and when they use heavily.
- Cannabis use increases the risk of abuse or dependence on other substances.
- Edible cannabis products pose a risk of accidental poisoning.
- For teens, regular THC use can impair memory, concentration, and impact learning. It’s also linked to psychological problems and a higher chance of substance abuse when they grow up.
- Cannabis use by youth may increase if it is legalized and becomes more available.

Effects of edible cannabis on youth

Anyone who consumes edible cannabis products can experience effects, such as:

- Altered perception/intoxication/nausea/vomiting
- Anxiety/panic/paranoia
- Dizziness/weakness/poor coordination/slurred speech
- Excessive sleepiness/apnea (not breathing for 10 seconds or longer)/heart problems

If you suspect a THC overdose, contact Poison Control immediately.



1-800-222-1222
mnpoison.org

Keeping edibles out of the hands of youth

- Store them safely. Store them like any medication or toxic product: out of reach or in locked locations.
- Be a role model. Don't use edibles in front of youth. It may impair your ability to create a safe environment.
- Do not drive. Driving under the influence (DUI) of cannabis is illegal and you could be charged with a DUI.
- Avoid buying edibles that look like real candy or treats. Put them back in a safe location immediately after use.
- Talk to family members, friends, and caregivers. Parents are most often the source of unintentional exposure; but family members, friends, and caregivers are also a source.

Tips for talking to youth about edible use

Parents/caregivers should talk to youth about the risks of edibles whether youth are using or not. Treat these talks the same way you'd talk about substances like alcohol and tobacco that are legal for adults but harmful to youth.

Youth 8 to 12 years old:

- Think about whether the young person is looking for connection, facts, or direction.
- Build trust; parents are a child's main influence.
- Start conversations now to build the foundation for future conversations.
- Set clear boundaries and share common-sense reasons for not using.
- Use simple facts; however, youth at this age can also handle some complex information.

Youth 13 to 17 years old:

- Focus on the young person's life and goals; this is more effective than generalizing.
- Talk factually with youth about cannabis. They often know more than we realize.
- Be open to questions; it's key for connection.
- Set clear expectations without judgment or shame.
- Let youth know it's OK to be honest; they'll be more likely to share their opinions and ask questions.
- Talk about what to do if youth find themselves in a situation where others are using or they are offered edibles.

For ages 18 to 21 years old:

- Educate yourself. Understand facts versus myths.
- Respect their boundaries, and yours too.
- Don't judge or talk down.
- Listen more, talk less. Connect, don't try to convince.
- Know where you stand but allow room for disagreement.
- Discuss what to do if they are offered an unknown substance or another person is in trouble.

Preventing youth cannabis use

According to the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey, 81% of 11th graders reported never using marijuana. Prevention is possible when youth have positive influences, including:

- Parent/caregiver support, engagement, monitoring, and disapproval of substance use
- School connectedness, academic support, and out of school time activities
- Access to health resources and medically accurate information
- Public policies that support prevention and prevent access to products

For questions or references

Contact publichealth@hennepin.us