

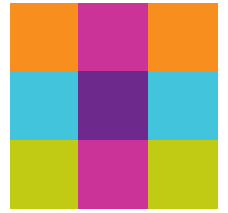
A decorative graphic consisting of a large purple rectangle on the left and four smaller squares on the right. The squares are arranged in a 2x2 grid: top-left is lime green, top-right is cyan, bottom-left is magenta, and bottom-right is orange.

camh Centre for Addiction
and Mental Health

McCain Centre Youth Engagement Initiative: **Adapting Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)** **to be Youth-Friendly**

Jackie Relihan and Jessica Rong

Our Team



The Youth Engagement Initiative (YEI) Team is made up of four Youth Engagement Facilitators (YEFs) and a Youth Engagement Coordinator and is based out of the McCain Centre for Child, Youth, and Family Mental Health at CAMH.

The Youth Engagement Facilitators bring their perspective as youth with lived experience into research and program activities related to youth mental health and substance use.

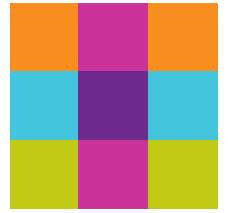
Our Team



The YEFs work to:

- Collaborate on program and research activities
- Develop youth-friendly resources
- Facilitate community consultations and workshops
- Lead the National Youth Action Council (NYAC)

McCain Centre Model for Youth Engagement



Youth-adult partnership: A relationship between adults and youth that focuses on joint work, common values, shared power and collective issues

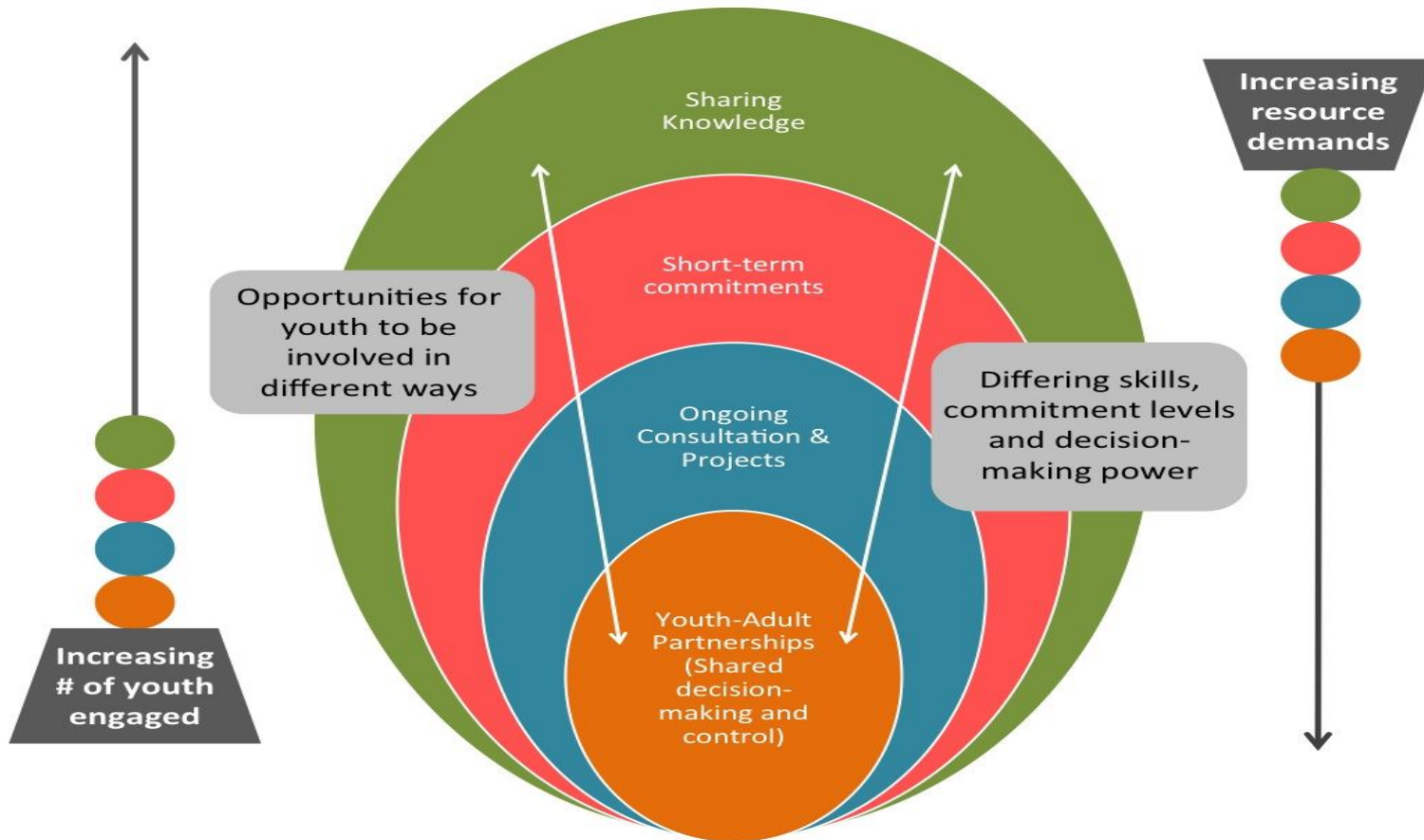
Implementing a successful Y-AP requires:

- Flexibility
- Mentorship
- Reciprocal activity
- Authentic decision making
- Shared power

McCain Centre Model for Youth Engagement



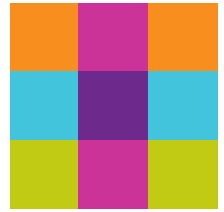
Maximizing and retaining youth engagement within McCain



Herzog, T., Heffernan, O., Chaim, G., and Henderson, J. (2015, October). *Next Level Youth Engagement: Strengthening research through youth-adult partnerships*. Poster session presented at the International Association of Youth Mental Health Conference, Montreal, QC.

Adapted from Hampton's Model of Civic Youth Engagement: Carlson, C. (2006). The Hampton experience as a new model for youth civic engagement. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14(1-2), 89-106.

Adapting LRCUG to be Youth-Friendly



- It is important to adapt the guidelines for youth!
- Steps our team took to make the guidelines youth-friendly:
 - Language/tone
 - Clarifying messages and removing jargon
 - Providing definition
 - Look/design of brochure
 - Creating a poster series
- First draft – please share your thoughts!

Recommendations

- **Cannabis use has health risks best avoided by abstaining**
- **Delay taking up cannabis use until later in life**
- **Identify and choose lower-risk cannabis products**
- **Don't use synthetic cannabinoids**
- **Avoid smoking burnt cannabis—choose safer ways of using**
- **If you smoke cannabis, avoid harmful smoking practices**
- **Limit and reduce how often you use cannabis**
- **Don't use and drive, or operate other machinery**
- **Avoid cannabis use altogether if you are at risk for mental health problems or are pregnant**
- **Avoid combining these risks**

Reference

Fischer, B., Russell, C., Sabioni, P., van den Brink, W., Le Foll, B., Hall, W., Rehm, J. & Room, R. (2017). Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG): An evidence-based update. *American Journal of Public Health, 107*(8). DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2017.303818.

Endorsements

The LRCUG have been endorsed by the following organizations:



Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction
Risque, Engagement, Impact

Centre canadien sur les dépendances et l'usage de substances
Centre de toxicomanie et de santé mentale

Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (in principle)



Cannabis use is a personal choice, but it comes with risks to your health and well-being. Follow these recommendations to reduce your risks.

Acknowledgment

The Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG) are an evidence-based intervention project by the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM), funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

A longer evidence summary of the guidelines, aimed at health professionals, is available at camh.ca.



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INITIATIVE CANADIENNE DE RECHERCHE EN ABUS DE SUBSTANCE



Health risks of cannabis use

There is strong scientific 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 co-ordination**
- **impaired perceptions or hallucinations**
- **fatal and non-fatal injuries, including those from motor-vehicle accidents, due to impairment**
- **mental health problems and cannabis dependence**
- **chronic respiratory or lung problems**
- **reproductive problems.**

Reducing health risks related to cannabis use

When choosing to use cannabis, you can actively take steps to reduce risks to your health. Below are 10 science-based recommendations for how to do so. These recommendations are aimed mainly at non-medical cannabis use.

Cannabis use has health risks best avoided by abstaining

To avoid all risks, do not use cannabis. If you decide to use, you could experience immediate, as well as long-term risks to your health and well-being. Any time you choose not to use, you avoid these risks.

Delay taking up cannabis use until later in life

Using cannabis at a young age, particularly before age 16, increases the likelihood of developing health, educational and social problems. Avoid cannabis use during adolescence. Generally, the later in life you begin to use cannabis, the lower the risk of problems.

Identify and choose lower-risk cannabis products

High-potency cannabis products, with high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, are more likely to result in harms. Some products contain a higher dose of cannabidiol (CBD), which counteracts some of THC's adverse effects. This means that products with high CBD-to-THC ratios reduce some of the risks. Know what you're using. Ideally, choose cannabis products with lower risk of harms.

Don't use synthetic cannabinoids

Compared with natural cannabis products, synthetic cannabis products (e.g., K2 or Spice) can lead to more severe health problems, even death. If you use, give preference to natural cannabis products and abstain from synthetics.

Avoid smoking burnt cannabis—choose safer ways of using

Smoking burnt cannabis, especially when combined with tobacco, can harm your lungs and respiratory system. Choose other methods, such as vaporizers or edibles instead—but recognize that they also come with some risks. For example, edibles are safer for your lungs, but you may consume larger doses and experience more severe impairment because psychoactive effects are delayed.

If you smoke cannabis, avoid harmful smoking practices

If you smoke cannabis, avoid "deep inhalation" or "breath-holding." These practices are meant to increase psychoactive experiences, but they increase the amount of toxic material absorbed by your lungs and into your body.

Limit and reduce how often you use cannabis

Frequent cannabis use (i.e., daily or almost every day) is strongly linked to a higher risk of health and social problems. Limit yourself—and ideally your friends or others you may be using with—to occasional use, such as on weekends or one day a week at most.

Don't use and drive, or operate other machinery

Driving while impaired by cannabis substantially increases your risk of being involved in a motor-vehicle accident resulting in injury or death. Don't use and drive, or use other machinery. Wait at least six hours after using cannabis—or even longer if you need. Combining cannabis and alcohol further increases impairment, so be sure to avoid this combination if you plan to drive.

Avoid cannabis use altogether if you are at risk for mental health problems or are pregnant

Some individuals should not use cannabis because of specific risk profiles. If you or an immediate family member has a history of psychosis or substance use disorder, your risk of cannabis-related mental health problems increases, and you should abstain from use. Pregnant women should not use cannabis because it could harm the fetus or newborn.

Avoid combining the risks identified above

The more of these risky behaviours you engage in when using cannabis, the higher your risk of harms. For example, initiating cannabis use at a young age and smoking high-potency products every day puts you at much higher risk of both immediate and long-term problems. Avoid combining these high-risk choices.



Recommendations

- Refrain from using cannabis* (see back for definitions)
- Avoid using until you are at least 16 - 18
- Choose lower-risk products
- Don't use synthetic cannabinoids
- Avoid smoking cannabis
- If you smoke, avoid deep inhalation or breath holding
- Reduce how often you use
- Don't use and drive
- Avoid use if you are pregnant
- Avoid use if you are at risk for psychosis or substance use disorder* (see back for definitions)
- Avoid combining any of the risks from this list

*Definition of terms used:

Cannabis: also known as marijuana (grass, weed, pot, dope, ganja and others), hashish (hash), hash oil (weed oil, honey oil)

Hallucinations: hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling or feeling something that is not actually there

Perceptions: the ability to see, hear or become aware of something through your physical senses

Psychosis: a loss of contact with reality, in which people have trouble distinguishing what is real and what is not

Substance use disorder: People use alcohol and other drugs for a variety of reasons. This use becomes problematic when it results in craving, loss of control of amount or frequency of use, compulsion to use and use despite consequences

Acknowledgment

The Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG) are an evidence-based intervention project by the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM), funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

This brochure was adapted by the Youth Engagement Initiative team at the McCain Centre for Child, Youth and Family Mental Health at CAMH using the LRCUG developed by the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM) (2017).

An additional version of the LRCUG, mainly aimed at adults who use cannabis and a longer evidence summary of the guidelines, aimed at health professionals, are available at camh.ca

Reference summary

Fischer, B., Russell, C., Sabioni, P., van den Brink, W., Le Foll, B., Hall, W., Rehm, J. & Room, R. (2017). Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG): An evidence-based update. *American Journal of Public Health, 107*(8). DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2017.303818

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2012). Cannabis (Marijuana, Hashish). Retrieved from http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/Cannabis/Pages/default.aspx

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Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)



Cannabis use is a personal choice, but it comes with risks to your health and well-being. These recommendations can help to inform you about ways to lower these risks.

This resource has been developed for youth by youth.

Reducing **health risks** related to cannabis use

The only way to completely avoid all of the risks of cannabis use is to refrain from using it.

If you choose to use cannabis, there are steps you can take to reduce the risks to your health. Here are 10 science-based recommendations for lower-risk use.

You're probably reading this because you are interested in using cannabis for non-medical purposes or you want to learn more about cannabis use.

Cannabis use is a personal choice but it comes with risks to your health and well-being. We have created these guidelines because it is important that you are aware of what these risks are.

There is strong scientific evidence that cannabis use is linked to these health risks:

- **Problems with thinking, memory or physical coordination**
- **Impaired perceptions and hallucinations*** (see back for definitions)
- **Fatal or non-fatal injuries, including those from car accidents, due to impairment**
- **Mental health problems and cannabis dependence**
- **Respiratory or lung concerns**
- **Negative health effects on a fetus or newborn**

We can't tell you whether or not to use cannabis. However, it is important that you make informed choices.

Avoid using cannabis until you are at least 16 - 18:

The later in life you start using cannabis, the lower the health risks. Using cannabis at a young age increases the risk of impacting your mental and physical health.

Choose lower-risk products:

High THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) products are associated with higher risks, including impaired mental health, dependence and injuries. Studies have shown that CBD (cannabidiol) reduces some of the negative effects of THC. Choose cannabis products with lower THC, or high CBD:THC ratios.

Don't use synthetic cannabinoids (e.g. K2 or Spice):

Synthetic cannabinoids are not the same as cannabis; in fact they have very little in common. The use of synthetic cannabinoids can lead to more severe health problems, even death. Choose natural cannabis products and do not use synthetic products.

Avoid smoking cannabis:

Especially when smoked with tobacco, long-term cannabis smoking is linked to bronchitis and cancer. Choose safer ways of using like vaporizers or edibles. But remember that these also are not risk-free.

If you smoke, avoid deep inhalation or breath holding:

These practices increase the amount of toxic material absorbed by your lungs and into your body.

Reduce how often you use cannabis:

Using cannabis frequently (daily or almost every day) is linked to negative health and social impacts. Try to limit yourself to occasional use (on weekends or one day a week).

Don't use and drive:

Driving after using cannabis increases your risk of being involved in an accident, as use can impair your attention, reaction and motor skills. Wait at least six hours after using cannabis (or even longer if needed) before driving. Combining cannabis and alcohol also leads to further impairment.

Avoid use if you are pregnant:

Individuals who are pregnant should avoid cannabis use. Cannabis use during pregnancy may affect one's own health and cause low birthweight and growth reduction for a fetus or newborn.

Avoid use if you are at risk for psychosis or substance use disorder:

If you or an immediate family member has a history of psychosis or substance use disorder then your chances of experiencing negative impacts on your mental health are higher.

Avoid combining any of the risks from this list:

This increases the chance of negative effects on your health and wellbeing.



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Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)



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If you choose to use cannabis here is one way that you can lower these risks:

Don't use and drive:

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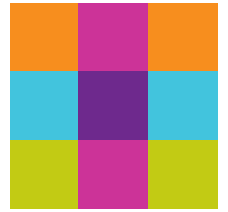
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Contact our team...

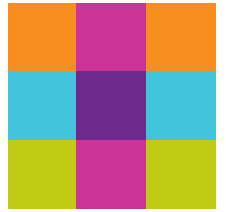


Share your feedback with us today

or

Contact us at mccainyouth@camh.ca

References



Heffernan, O., Herzog, T., Schiralli, J., Hawke, L., Chaim, G. and Henderson, J. (2017). Implementation of a youth-adult partnership model in youth mental health systems research: Challenges and successes. *Health Expectations*, 1-6. doi: 10.1111/hex.12554