

# Myths and Realities about Cannabis Risks

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## Transcript

### **[0:00 Introduction]**

*Dr. Jason MacKillop:* Now, this video is not about being pro-cannabis or anti-cannabis. It's about knowing the facts and making the best choices based on those facts. I'm James MacKillop. I'm a clinical psychologist and a scientist at McMaster University and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. I direct the Peter Boris Centre for Addictions Research and the DeGroot Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research.

### **[What is cannabis use disorder? 0:22]**

*Dr. Jason MacKillop:* The first thing you should know is just because cannabis is legal, it doesn't mean that it's harmless or comes without risks. One of the common myths is that cannabis is not addictive, but some people do develop cannabis use disorder, which is the technical definition of addiction to cannabis.

Cannabis use disorder has a number of symptoms like negative consequences from cannabis, loss of control over cannabis use, and cravings. Among people who use cannabis, about 1 in 10 develop cannabis use disorder. This rate doubles in people who start early as teenagers and gets as high as 50% among people who use cannabis daily.

### **[Is cannabis physically addictive? 0:47]**

*Dr. Jason MacKillop:* Dr. James MacKillop: Another myth is that cannabis is not physically addictive. Many people who use cannabis regularly do develop physical dependence. What this means is the development of tolerance or needing to use more cannabis over time to get the same effects. Another symptom of physical dependence is withdrawal, which refers to when people who use cannabis frequently or heavily stop and experience a syndrome of negative consequences, including anxiety, depression, irritability, nausea, insomnia, and other physical symptoms.

Cannabis can lead to cognitive impairments and increased risk for other psychiatric conditions like depression, anxiety, and psychosis. It's also associated with lung harms, such as chronic bronchitis and gastrointestinal illness, such as cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome. This condition refers to severe nausea and vomiting that doesn't respond to traditional treatment.

## **[Who is most at risk? 1:33]**

*Dr. James MacKillop:* I'm not trying to demonize cannabis. We don't need a modern-day reefer madness. An important nuance is that most of these consequences only happen to a subset of people who use cannabis. They tend to happen to people who use cannabis heavily, frequently, and especially products that are high in delta-9 THC, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis. For most of these outcomes, the more delta-9 THC you consume, the higher your risk.

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