

# CANNABIS STRENGTHS AND POTENCIES



YMCA  
Youth Cannabis  
Awareness  
Program

Programme de  
sensibilisation des  
jeunes au cannabis  
du YMCA



## CANNABIS STRENGTHS AND POTENCIES



THC is the chemical found in cannabis responsible for making people feel “high.” Potency refers to the amount of THC in a cannabis product. THC content is expressed in milligrams per gram (mg/g) or as a percentage of milligrams per gram of cannabis<sup>4</sup>.

### INTERPRETING THE LABELS

The cannabis plant today has more THC content compared to cannabis from early 1990s. This is because of technological advances in the production of cannabis. Furthermore, there are different cannabis products with varying levels of THC.

Examples include:

**Cannabis flower** rolled into a blunt or joint used for smoking with up to 30% THC (up to 300 mg/g)<sup>5</sup>

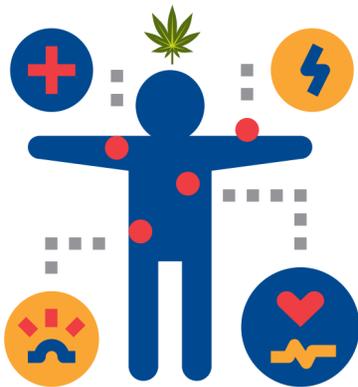
**Cannabis concentrates** such as cannabis oil used in vapes with up to 95% THC (up to 950 mg/g)<sup>1</sup>

**Cannabis edibles** such as candies or beverages with varying levels of THC depending on whether they are made with cannabis flower or cannabis concentrate<sup>1</sup>

**REMEMBER:**

The higher the THC content in a cannabis product, the stronger the effects will be on the mind of the person using the substance. Using high THC products could increase the risk of experiencing negative side effects and, as a response, could cause one to seek treatment in the emergency room.<sup>1</sup>

THC can have varying effects on different individuals because everybody is unique. Factors that can influence the effects of THC include a person’s age, their size/weight, their medical history, previous experiences with cannabis, and the frequency, quantity, and method of cannabis consumption.<sup>3</sup> With the same method of use, same frequency of use and same potency of product, one person may develop dependence while another person may experience only minimal harms. Likewise, not all cannabis products are created equally. Different cannabis products contain different levels of THC, which can also impact an individual’s reaction.



## FACTORS INFLUENCING CANNABIS REACTIONS



### THERE IS NO EXACT ‘SAFE’ THC POTENCY

Unlike alcohol, cannabis does not have a standard dose. However, Canada’s National Institute for Cannabis Health and Education suggests a standard dose of 2.5mg of THC for ingested cannabis (cannabis infused food and drink).

In Canada, the THC limit for cannabis infused food/drink is set at 1% or 10mg per package. This means that an entire package of cannabis infused food/drink contains 4 times more THC than the recommended 2.5 mg dose (4 X 2.5mg= 10mg THC)<sup>4</sup>.

By law, THC content is indicated on the packaging of every cannabis product provided by the federally licensed producers across Canada. However, indicating THC content per package can become confusing. Ideally, the THC limit should be per serving, not per package.

For example, a chocolate bar in a package can be divided by squares. This cannabis infused chocolate bar contains 10 mg of THC total, which can be easily broken into 4 pieces containing 2.5 milligrams of THC each. This would mean that each piece is equivalent to one standard dose.

### THC MILK CHOCOLATE BLEND



THC:  
10 MG

### MINIMIZING RISK OF CONSUMING CANNABIS

The only way to avoid the risks associated with cannabis is to not use it.

For those choosing to use cannabis:

- Start low and go slow.<sup>2</sup>
- Use starting dose of 2.5mg or less for ingested cannabis.<sup>4</sup>
- Use starting dose of 1-2 inhalations of low-potency (10% or less THC) smokable cannabis product.<sup>4</sup>
- If consuming cannabis edibles, wait at least 4 hours after initial consumption to ingest more.<sup>1</sup>
- Consume in a safe familiar environment, around people you trust.<sup>3</sup>

### WHEN WILL YOU FEEL THE EFFECTS?

It should take around 30 minutes to 3 hours to feel the effects of THC infused foods and drinks, with effects peaking within 2 to 4 hours. In terms of smoking or vaporizing, effects should be felt within seconds to minutes, with effects peaking within 10 to 30 minutes.<sup>4</sup>



#### References:

1. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (n.d.). *Edible Cannabis, Cannabis Extracts and Cannabis Topicals: A Primer on the New Cannabis Products*. [https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2019-06/CCSA-Cannabis-Edibles-Extracts-Topicals-Topic-Summary-2019-en\\_1.pdf](https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2019-06/CCSA-Cannabis-Edibles-Extracts-Topicals-Topic-Summary-2019-en_1.pdf)
2. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (n.d.). *10 WAYS to Reduce Risks to Your Health When Using Cannabis*. <https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdfs---reports-and-books---research/canadas-lower-risk-guidelines-cannabis-pdf.pdf>
3. Government of Canada. (2019, June 14). *Cannabis and your health*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis/health-effects.html>
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5. Canadian Public Health Association. (n.d.). *Cannabasics*. <https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/cannabis/cannabasics-2018-fact-sheets-e.pdf#:~:text=ORAL-MUCOSAL->