Harmful Effects of Early Cannabis Use

25% of Canadians age 15 to 24 years old use Cannabis each year.

Some risks apply to users of all ages, but few are aware of the unique risks for people under age 25.

Young people should try to delay cannabis use as long as possible.

Here are 5 reasons why:

1. **Effects on the Brain**
   
   Our brains are not fully developed until around age 25. Early and regular cannabis use can impair the development of an area of the brain known as the prefrontal cortex. This can impair memory, decision making, and problem solving. We don’t know if these effects are permanent and can’t predict who will be affected.

2. **Motor Vehicle Safety**
   
   Cannabis increases the risk of a motor vehicle accidents by impairing the drivers’ reaction time, coordination, and concentration. In Canada, adolescents between 15 to 19 years old are the most likely to drive after using cannabis.
Cannabis use is linked to psychosis, particularly in young people and especially those who have a parent or sibling who have experienced psychosis.

**Symptoms of Psychosis**
- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Mood changes

Cannabis use may also be linked with depression and anxiety.

1 in 6 individuals who use cannabis during adolescence will experience problematic use, physical dependence and/or cannabis withdrawal symptoms. In young people, daily use of cannabis can develop into a substance use disorder even faster than nicotine or alcohol.

Cannabis use before age 16 is associated with using other drugs later in life. Cannabis use can lower motivation in young people and is associated with poorer grades and school attendance.

**For people under the age of 25, remember:**
- Don’t use
- Delay use
- Decrease use
- Don’t use and Drive
- Don’t smoke it
- Don’t over-dose

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