Cannabis, HIV, and Your Health

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Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic…one woman at a time.

#onewomanatatime #thewellproject

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Cannabis and the Law

- Cannabis has medicinal properties
  - Can help people living with HIV, cancer ...

But:

- Cannabis laws and their enforcement vary

*Our fact sheets are mainly about the US*

More information:

*Cannabis, Health, and the Law in the US*

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What is Cannabis?

- Family of plants
  - Consumed (marijuana) or used to make fabrics (hemp)
- Cannabinoids extracted for consumption:
  - Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) makes you high
  - Cannabidiol (CBD) does not cause a high
- FDA-approved synthetic versions of THC:
  - Dronabinol (Marinol) and Nabilone (Cesamet)
- Natural cannabis contains terpenes
  - Combination of terpenes and cannabinoids has benefits
- Talk to your provider before taking cannabis!

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Can lower inflammation

Cannabis can relieve:

- Anxiety symptoms (social anxiety disorders)
- Chronic pain
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Increased appetite and decreased HIV-related weight loss
- Insomnia
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)-related spasticity symptoms
- Nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy
- Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms
- Tourette syndrome symptoms
Dangers of Cannabis

- Cannabis can cause or worsen mental health disorders:
  - Anxiety
  - Paranoia
  - Memory
  - Attention
  - Psychosis
Why Do People Living with HIV Use Cannabis?

• Relieve peripheral neuropathy symptoms
• Address ongoing inflammation from HIV
• Reduce nausea and improve appetite
• Smoking may work faster than eating
  But:
  — Smoking damages body and increases inflammation
• Current cannabis study in people living with HIV
  — May advance HIV cure research

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Cannabis and HIV Treatment

• Interacts with some antiretroviral drugs
• Significant interactions:
  – Reyataz (atazanavir)
  – Sustiva (efavirenz)
  – Intelen (etravirine)
• May need to adjust HIV drug dosages
• **Tell your provider about everything you are taking!**
  – Medical confidentiality laws protect you, even if cannabis is illegal in your state

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Cannabis and HIV Treatment

• Weak interactions:
  – Genvoya
  – Kaletra
  – Norvir
  – Prezcobix
  – Prezista boosted with Norvir
  – Stribild
  – Sunlenca
  – Symtuza

• No adjustment needed, but watch for problems
• Other interactions are possible

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Medical vs. Recreational Marijuana

• Medical marijuana
  - Same substances as recreational marijuana
  - Legal benefits

• State regulations
  - Whether recreational marijuana is legal
  - Which conditions qualify for medical marijuana card

• Medical conditions:
  - ALS
  - Anorexia
  - Cancer
  - Crohn's disease
  - Epilepsy and seizures
  - Fibromyalgia
  - Glaucoma
  - HIV
  - Migraines
  - MS and muscle spasms
  - Pain (chronic)
  - Parkinson's disease

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Methods of Consuming Cannabis

• Inhalation/smoking
  — Rapid action
  — **Smoking is harmful**, even if it is “just” weed!

• Eating edibles
  — Variable potency -> be careful with source
  — Start small and wait for effect
  — **Make sure kids and pets can’t get at them!**

• Applying to skin
  — Pain relief
  — Doesn’t produce high

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• To learn more about this topic, please read the full fact sheet:
  – Cannabis, HIV, and Your Health
• For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
  – www.thewellproject.org
  – www.facebook.com/thewellproject
  – www.twitter.com/thewellproject
  – www.instagram.com/thewellprojecthiv