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Cannabis, HIV, and Your Health

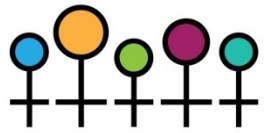
Last updated: January 17, 2024

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

#onewomanatatime

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Cannabis and the Law

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

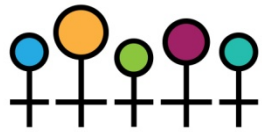
But:

- 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?

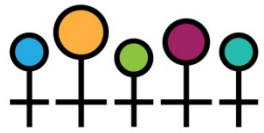
- Family of plants
 - Consumed (marijuana) or used to make fabrics (hemp)
- Cannabinoids extracted for consumption:
 - Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) makes you high
 - Cannabidiol (CBD) does not cause a high
- FDA-approved synthetic versions of THC:
 - Dronabinol (Marinol) and Nabilone (Cesamet)
- Natural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



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Medicinal Benefits of Cannabis

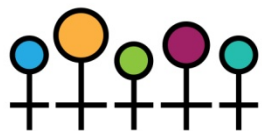
- Can lower inflammation
- Cannabis can relieve:
 - Anxiety symptoms (social anxiety disorders)
 - Chronic pain
 - Depression
 - Fatigue
 - Increased appetite and decreased HIV-related weight loss
 - Insomnia
 - Multiple sclerosis (MS)-related spasticity symptoms
 - Nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy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



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Dangers of Cannabis

- Cannabis can cause or worsen mental health disorders:
 - Anxiety
 - Paranoia
 - Memory
 - Attention
 - Psychosis



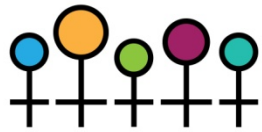
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Why Do People Living with HIV Use Cannabis?

- Relieve peripheral neuropathy symptoms
- Address ongoing inflammation from HIV
- Reduce nausea and improve appetite
- Smoking may work faster than eating

But:

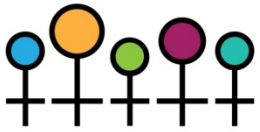
- **Smoking damages body and increases inflammation**
- Current cannabis study in people living with HIV
 - May advance HIV cure research



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Cannabis and HIV Treatment

- Interacts with some antiretroviral drugs
- Significant interactions:
 - Reyataz (atazanavir)
 - Sustiva (efavirenz)
 - Intelence (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

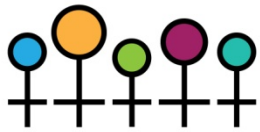
- Medical marijuana
 - Same substances as recreational marijuana
 - Legal benefits
- State regulations
 - Whether recreational marijuana is legal
 - Which conditions qualify for medical marijuana card
- Medical conditions:
 - ALS
 - Anorexia
 - Cancer
 - Crohn's disease
 - Epilepsy and seizures
 - Fibromyalgia
 - 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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Learn More!

- 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