



7 Things You Need to Know about Edible Cannabis

What Is Edible Cannabis?

Edible cannabis products (edibles for short) are products containing cannabinoids that you eat or drink. Cannabinoids are chemical compounds found in cannabis that can affect your mind and body when consumed. THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is a cannabinoid that makes an individual euphoric and intoxicated (or high). CBD (cannabidiol) is a non-intoxicating cannabinoid that might have some therapeutic benefit, although more research is needed to confirm its potential medical use. There is a wide range of edible cannabis products. Although some edible cannabis products might look like normal food items, they are not food and are not intended to provide any nutritional value.

Edible cannabis products provide an alternative method of cannabis consumption to smoking and vaping. If you are interested in trying edible cannabis, here are seven things you need to know.

1. Be Sure to Read the Label Carefully

Edible cannabis products vary widely in their appearance and ingredients, including how much THC and CBD they contain. Always read the label before ingesting edible cannabis. If you have never tried an edible before or are new to cannabis, **consume no more than 2.5 mg of THC and wait to feel effects before taking more.** It might also be worth doing a bit of homework to learn how THC and CBD affect your brain and body, and how these effects differ between inhalation and ingestion of cannabis. Keep in mind that some edible cannabis products might have expiry dates and ingredients that could cause allergic reactions.

Read the label carefully for concentration of THC and CBD, and instructions for use.

2. The Effects of Ingesting Cannabis Last Longer than Inhaling Cannabis

It takes a long time for your body to absorb the THC from edible cannabis and so the THC is present in your body for longer than after smoking or vaping cannabis. The effects of ingesting cannabis last longer compared to when cannabis is smoked or vaped. **The effects can last up to 12 hours, with residual effects lasting up to 24 hours.** If you are new to edibles or to cannabis, use these products in a place where you feel safe and comfortable, and with friends or family who are experienced in using them. If you plan to use edible cannabis at a friend or family member's home, make travel arrangements ahead of time or plan to stay over. **Do not drive or operate heavy equipment after using cannabis.**

Clear your schedule because ingesting edible cannabis has long-lasting effects.



3. The Effects of Ingesting Cannabis Can Be More Intense than Inhaling Cannabis

For some people, the effects of edible cannabis can be **more intense than inhaling a similar dose of dried cannabis**. This intensity is partly because when you ingest THC, your liver turns it into a stronger form. With edible cannabis, both the THC from the original product and the stronger form of THC produced by your liver can influence the intensity of the high. Individuals who are new to edibles or cannabis should look at the THC content of the product and start with edible cannabis products containing **no more than 2.5 mg of THC**. It is best that your first few times using edible cannabis be with trusted friends or family members who have experience with them. If you or someone you know has consumed too much cannabis and is not feeling well, contact your local poison centre or seek medical attention.

Start low by eating a cannabis edible with no more than 2.5 mg of THC.

4. It Takes Time to Feel the Full Effects

With edible cannabis, the intoxicating effects or “high” do not kick in for **about 30 minutes to two hours and peak at about four hours**. The effects can last up to 12 hours after use and residual effects can last up to 24 hours, so you could be affected into the next day. This timing differs from smoking or vaping cannabis, where the effects start to be felt within a few seconds or minutes and peak at about 30 minutes. When you ingest edible cannabis, the THC first travels to your stomach and then to your liver, before making it to your bloodstream and brain. This process varies across individuals, making it difficult to predict when you will actually feel the full effects of edible cannabis. Because it can take up to four hours to feel the full effects, consuming more cannabis within this time period can result in over-intoxication. Over-intoxication can take the form of anxiety and panic, nausea and vomiting, and symptoms of psychosis (paranoia).

Be patient and go slow, ingesting edible cannabis with no more than 2.5 mg of THC at a time.

5. Be Sure to Properly Store Your Cannabis Products

Chocolates and brownies with cannabis in them look like chocolates and brownies without cannabis in them. In other words, they appeal to both adults and children. In fact, **unintentional ingestion of edible cannabis by children and pets** is more common than you might think, and **can lead to severe health problems**. If you have edible cannabis at home, including edibles you made yourself, be sure that they are properly labelled, stored in child-resistant containers that are re-sealed after use, and stored out of the sight and reach of children and pets. It is also a good idea to invest in a lockbox or to make your own. If you or someone you know has accidentally consumed cannabis and is not feeling well, contact your local poison centre or seek medical attention.

Be sure your cannabis products are properly labelled and stored.



6. Cannabis Should Not Be Mixed with Alcohol or Other Substances

Alcohol increases the intoxicating and impairing effects of cannabis. Consuming cannabis and alcohol at the same time can **significantly raise your risk of over-intoxication and impairment**. As mentioned, cannabis over-intoxication can include anxiety, panic, nausea, vomiting and paranoia. To reduce the risk of these negative experiences, stick to either cannabis or alcohol, not both. Also, avoid mixing cannabis with nicotine or any intoxicating substance, including stimulants (“uppers”) and depressants (“downers”), as the mix can cause serious health complications. If you are taking or planning to take prescription medications, speak to a healthcare practitioner about whether cannabis interferes with them.

Avoid mixing cannabis with alcohol or other intoxicating substances.

7. Regular Use of Cannabis Can Affect Your Mental Health

Daily or near-daily cannabis use increases the risk of dependence and can **bring on or worsen disorders related to anxiety or depression**. Regular use of cannabis products containing high levels of THC can **increase your risk of developing psychosis**, especially if you have a family history of psychosis or schizophrenia. (See the report, *Clearing the Smoke on Cannabis: Regular Use and Mental Health* for more information.) These facts are meant to make you think of the risks associated with using cannabis and to help you make a more informed decision. To lower your risks of experiencing mental health problems, choose products with no more than 100 mg/g (10%) of THC for those that you inhale and no more than 10 mg of THC for those that you ingest. Limiting your use of cannabis can also reduce these risks.

Avoid daily or near-daily use of cannabis and choose products with lower levels of THC.

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