

Poison Prevention Week Backgrounder



Poison Prevention Week is an annual national awareness campaign to draw attention to the causes of unintentional poisoning and how to prevent them from occurring. Each year, more than 1,500 Canadians lose their lives and nearly 8,000 are hospitalized due to unintentional poisoning.

With the legalization of cannabis in Canada in 2018, cannabis use has become more prevalent, and calls to Canadian poison centres for cannabis-related poisonings are on the rise. With cannabis in the hands of more Canadians, it is important to know how to safely store it. This year, Parachute is joining forces with our partners across Canada to prevent unintentional poisonings from cannabis products and other common poisons.

The facts on cannabis poisoning

- Children are vulnerable to poisoning from the chemicals in cannabis because of their small body size and lower weight.
- Edibles can have a stronger, more prolonged effect on the body than other forms of cannabis. Ingesting cannabis is the most common cause of cannabis poisoning in children.
- Cannabis edibles often resemble common snacks (e.g., cookies, brownies, gummy candies). A young child may be unable to tell the difference and unknowingly consume a large amount.
- Studies suggest that child poisoning may be linked to imitative behaviour, as children often want to do the same things their parents and caregivers do. Adults should avoid using cannabis products in front of children.
- Child-resistant packaging has been shown to reduce poisoning injuries and fatalities. It is important to keep cannabis products in their original, child-resistant packaging.
- Only 40 per cent of Canadian parents report knowing about local poison control resources. Parents and caregivers should keep their local poison centre phone number stored in their cellphone or in a visible location, such as on the fridge.
- 94 per cent of Canadian parents who use cannabis agree it is their responsibility to safely store their cannabis products; however, only 41 per cent strongly agree that they are aware of guidelines on how to store cannabis. **Cannabis products should be in a child-resistant container or package, stored in a locked compartment, drawer, or cupboard, out of sight and out of reach at all times.**

If unintentional poisoning occurs, contact your local poison centre. In case of loss of consciousness or difficulty breathing, call 911.

Visit parachute.ca/poisoning for a list of poison centres across Canada, and to learn more about how you can #RethinkPoisons.

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