

Cannabis and your upcoming heart surgery

Do you use cannabis? If so, it is important to understand how it might affect your surgery.



How can cannabis affect my surgery?

- **Anesthesia:** Cannabis can make it hard to predict the amount of medication needed to keep you comfortable during and after surgery.
- **Pain and nausea:** Cannabis can make it harder to control your pain, and you may have worse nausea after surgery.
- **Breathing problems:** Smoking affects the lungs and can cause wheezing, coughing, and chronic bronchitis. It can lead to breathing problems during surgery.
- **Cardiac effects:** Cannabis can increase or decrease heart rate and blood pressure, especially during surgery.
- **Medications:** Cannabis might interact with your other medications. For example, it could increase the risk of bleeding if you are taking blood thinners.
- **Wound healing:** Smoking cannabis can lower the oxygen in your blood meaning you may take longer to heal.
- **Withdrawal after surgery:** Cutting back your cannabis use before surgery lowers your risk of cannabis withdrawal after surgery.



Due to the effects of cannabis on your surgery, reduce your cannabis use as early as possible and **stop using cannabis at least 72 hours before surgery.**

If you choose to continue using cannabis before surgery, consider these lower-risk guidelines.

Tips for safer cannabis use before surgery:

- Avoid inhalable products; use oils, edibles, or capsules.
- If eating cannabis products, follow the label carefully. It can sometimes take a while before you feel the effects, and you may take too much.
- Choose products with a low THC and/or a high CBD content.
- Avoid using cannabis daily. Try cutting back to once a week.
- Buy products from a licensed retailer only. Do not use synthetic cannabis products such as K2 or spice.
- Tell your surgical team about your cannabis use.

Some people have cannabis prescribed for medical reasons. See your primary care provider to discuss other treatments that may be better for you as you prepare for your heart surgery.

If you want to stop or cut back on your use but do not know where to start, please talk to your surgical team.

Resources to help you manage your cannabis use:

AccessMHA

Coordinated access and navigation to free mental health, substance use health, and addictions resources in eastern Ontario

accessmha.ca

Connex Ontario

Mental health and addiction treatment services

1-866-531-2600

connexontario.ca

Canada's lower-risk cannabis use guidelines

canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/resources/lower-risk-cannabis-use-guidelines