

# Ambush

The Sneak Attack  
of Cannabis



by  
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**“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God” (1 Peter 2:16, ESV).**

October 17, 2018, was a monumental day in Canada when the Cannabis Act was passed and the substance became legalized within the country for those over 19. The promise was made that this act was in the interest of all Canadians, especially Canadian youth. This promise was noble, however, there continues to be several myths surrounding the use of marijuana. Sometimes it is difficult to decipher the facts from fiction. The story is a complicated one and we want to make sure youth know all the information when making choices around this substance.

What further complicates the issue are the two most active chemicals that make up this substance: CBD and THC. “The THC has the greater impact on the body and the brain (delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol). The other active chemical in cannabis is CBD, which is becoming increasingly known for its potential medical properties and ability to moderate the effects of THC” (drugfreekids.org, 2016). While folks receiving medical treatment with CBD (cannabidiol) oil under a doctor’s care are in an entirely different category, it can cause us to go quiet on the issue. CBD oil is manufactured without the use of THC which is the active drug in cannabis that gives the “high.”

There are so many reasons why as a community, a culture, and as Christians, we should warn youth against getting involved in experimenting with recreational cannabis.

## Fact or Fiction?

#1 Marijuana is a gateway drug.

**Fact** Involvement with cannabis is often downplayed, with a fictitious statement about cannabis not being a gateway drug. As cannabis becomes more available or accessible, it is emerging as a gateway drug. While a few years ago drugs such as alcohol and tobacco may have been a gateway to marijuana, now marijuana may come first. It is proven that additional substance abuse may stem from the familiarity with cannabis.

#2 Marijuana is not addictive.

**Fiction** Contrary to popular belief, people can become addicted to cannabis. Continued, frequent, and heavy cannabis use can cause physical dependency and

addiction.<sup>1</sup> While anyone experimenting with drugs would like to think that cannabis doesn’t have addictive components, that would be a false assumption. While it takes longer to develop an addiction to marijuana than other drugs, it definitely has addictive components.

#3 Marijuana has long-term effects.

**Fact** The most difficult part of the marijuana journey is the long-term impact. Cognitive impairment and risk for serious mental illness (including paranoia) are all the results of connecting with this substance on a regular basis and over a long period of time. When adolescents choose to use, they are at even greater risk of damaging their developing brain. Persistent cannabis use over 20 years was associated with neuropsychological decline, and greater decline was evident for more persistent users. **This effect was concentrated among adolescent-onset cannabis users, a finding consistent with the results of several studies showing executive functioning or verbal IQ deficits among adolescent-onset but not adult-onset chronic cannabis users. The finding was also consistent in studies showing impairment of learning, memory, and executive functions in samples of adolescent cannabis users.**<sup>2</sup>

#4 Marijuana helps anxiety and depression.

**Fiction** Marijuana perceivably can produce a calm over a person suffering from anxiety and depression. However, the tolerance levels soon become maxed and more marijuana is needed to achieve the same result. Now the young person who started out with one problem can quickly develop a second round of problems from their self-medication. Frequent cannabis use has also been associated with an increased risk of suicide, depression, and anxiety disorders.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, I have been interviewing professionals who work locally in addiction-related fields. They all say marijuana has infiltrated all levels of the culture. Substance abuse is stealing the future of our kids across Canada, including the Maritime region. Misinformation in the culture about this drug has ambushed our kids’ thinking, with the culture telling them, “It’s not that bad.” We all need to do our part and talk to the kids in our sphere of influence. Let’s take the advice of 1 Peter and live as people who are free—free from the bondage of substance.

A Canadian study (just released) has uncovered that cannabis use is on the rise due to the pandemic. Please contact CAFNB Inc. if we can start the conversation with your group through the use of digital technology. “God, help us to raise up a generation of youth who look to you and not to substances for meaning and direction. Amen.”

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1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/health-effects/addiction.html>.  
2. From Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 2012.  
3. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/health-effects/mental-health.html>, 2020.