

J11: Marijuana and Cannabis Products

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Introduction

With the advent of legalization in Canada, marijuana and marijuana-containing products are increasingly available to adult consumers.

Essentials

- Although marijuana is generally considered to be low risk, adverse effects can still occur. The most common signs and symptoms of overconsumption include anxiety, paranoia, panic, tachycardia, confusion, dry mouth, and nausea and vomiting.
- Because of their delayed onset, individuals are far more likely to over-consume edible marijuana products.
- Children are particularly at risk from ingested cannabis products.
- Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome is the most significant acute complication of marijuana use.

General Information

- The majority of individuals who experience adverse reactions to cannabis can be managed with gentle, supportive care and reassurance only. Symptoms are generally self-limiting and resolve gradually over a period of hours.
- Children who have consumed cannabis-containing products may develop significant and profound central nervous system depression. Hyperkinesia may occur despite apparent coma. Provide supportive care to these patients, ensuring a patent airway and effective oxygenation and ventilation.
- Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome is a cyclical vomiting syndrome that occurs primarily in individuals who use significant quantities of cannabis, generally on a daily basis. It involves a prodromal phase, where individuals feel vaguely unwell and mildly nauseated, followed by a hyperemetic phase with persistent nausea and vomiting. People suffering from cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome often report that hot water (bathing or showering) improves their symptoms; some evidence suggests that use of a capsaicin cream rubbed on the abdomen may also attenuate the nausea. Supportive care, including fluid replacement and anti-emetic medications, can be helpful; ultimately, cessation of cannabis use and time will allow symptoms to resolve.

Interventions

First Responder

- Keep the patient warm and protect from further heat loss
- Place the patient in a position of comfort, as permitted by clinical condition
- Provide airway management and supplemental oxygen as required
 - → [B01: Airway Management](#)
 - → [A07: Oxygen Administration](#)

Emergency Medical Responder – All FR interventions, plus:

- Measure capillary blood glucose and manage hypoglycemia as required
 - → [E01: Hypoglycemia and Hyperglycemia](#)

Primary Care Paramedic – All FR and EMR interventions, plus:

- Consider vascular access in cases of persistent vomiting
 - → [D03: Vascular Access](#)
- Consider antiemetic:
 - → [E07: Nausea and Vomiting](#)

References

1. Wang GS. Cannabis (marijuana): Acute intoxication. In UpToDate. 2020. [\[Link\]](#)

