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Harm Reduction Strategies for THC Products

- “Start low and go slow”
 - It is advisable to start with a low dose and gradually increase if needed.
 - This helps you gauge the effects and minimize the risk of overconsumption.
 - Especially true if you are new to using THC products or have a low tolerance.
- Avoid concentrates, extracts, and derivatives:
 - Cannabis “flower” has a much lower THC content than dabs, wax, carts, etc.
 - The latter is also more likely to have heavy metals, contaminants, and impurities.
- Be mindful of potency:
 - THC product potency can vary greatly among different products.
 - This knowledge can help you make more informed decisions about dosing.
 - Realistically, you might not be able to actually know the potency of some products you are consuming.
 - Even in states where THC products are regulated, there’s reports of dosage information being wildly inaccurate.
 - Take the time to understand the potency of the product you are using, whether it's flower, edibles, or concentrates.
- Choose reliable sources (to the degree that is possible):
 - This is next to impossible to accomplish in Texas, moreso relevant in states where cannabis is legal.
 - Recalls take place - [OLCC recalls cannabis flower from three Producers; Products contain contaminants](#)
 - Purchase THC products from reputable and legal sources to ensure quality and safety as best as possible.
 - Products obtained from unofficial or unregulated sources may be contaminated or contain unknown substances.
 - Even in Texas, I would personally be more mistrustful of THC products for sale at gas stations, vape shops, and head shops than products sold at “more reputable” vendors (again, it’s hard to actually gauge the reputability of companies in states where there are no regulation requirements.)
- Understand different consumption methods:
 - Be aware of the different ways THC products can be consumed, such as smoking, vaporizing, or consuming edibles.
 - Each method has different effects and potential risks.
 - For example, 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 still be affected the next day.

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- Be mindful of your environment:
 - Use THC products in a comfortable and familiar setting.
 - Being in a safe and relaxed environment can help mitigate potential anxiety or discomfort.
- Stay hydrated and manage munchies:
 - THC products can sometimes cause dry mouth and an increased appetite, commonly known as the munchies.
 - Stay hydrated by drinking water and have snacks readily available to manage cravings and avoid binge eating.
- Avoid driving under the influence:
 - Driving under the influence of THC products can impair your judgment, coordination, and reaction time.
 - It's essential to avoid operating a vehicle or heavy machinery when under the influence of THC products.
 - Unhelpful messaging that trivializes driving under the influence of THC products is prevalent throughout society

Important notes -

- “Harm reduction” is not simply a label that can be slapped onto THC product use to make it inconsequential.
- The only way to ensure that there will be no harms associated with THC product use is to abstain entirely.
- If you have abstained from THC products for a period of time, it's recommended that you use great caution and discuss openly with a variety of people before attempting controlled use.
 - Do the benefits of using THC products again actually outweigh the risks?
- Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome (CHS), cannabis-induced psychosis, and amotivational syndrome are all relevant concerns to be mindful of and watch out for.
- I am very intentionally using the phrase “THC products” throughout this document, as opposed to “cannabis.”
 - This idea was acquired from Aaron Weiner, PhD, ABPP and more accurately captures the landscape, especially in the age of $\Delta 8$, $\Delta 10$, THC-O, HHC, etc being sold in gas stations throughout Texas.
 - It's misleading to call products that contain up to 90% THC “cannabis.”
- ***Loss of control is a hallmark symptom of addiction, so an inability to stick to one's own harm reduction goals may mean that abstinence is the more straightforward and safe route.***