



The recreational use of cannabis, also known as marijuana, weed, pot and grass, will become legal in Canada on October 17, 2018.

The use of cannabis, alcohol, prescription medications or illegal drugs can make you impaired. This creates a significant safety risk in the workplace, and even more so in safety-sensitive jobs such as driving or operating heavy equipment.

Q. Can I be high at work?

No. You do not have the right to recreationally use cannabis, or be impaired, at work.

As always, you must work safely and ensure that you do not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of yourself or others in the workplace.

Q. Does using weed impact workplace safety?

Yes. Anyone working while impaired may put their life, and others, at risk.

Q. What is my role in workplace safety?

As an employee, your role is to:

- Always work in a safe manner
- Discuss with your supervisor anything that might impair your ability to work safely (medical or non-medical)
- Follow workplace policy, education and training
- Report concerns to your supervisor

Q. With the legalization of recreational-use cannabis, does an employer's responsibility change?

No. Employers and supervisors must:

- Protect the health, safety and welfare of employees
- Control the consumption and possession of cannabis at work, as you currently do with alcohol
- Enforce your workplace impairment policy
- Accommodate employees with medical needs or disabilities (including disabilities from substance dependence)
- Ensure human rights, privacy and labour agreements are not in conflict with impairment policies

Q. How can employers help prevent workplace injury due to impairment?

Employers and supervisors should:

- Develop and implement an impairment policy
- Communicate the impairment policy to all staff
- Recognize impairment

- Act on or report a concern
- Document incidents
- Refer the worker to appropriate help or supports
- Evaluate the need for accommodation

Q: What does a good impairment policy include?

All workplaces should have a drug and alcohol policy that addresses the potential for cannabis impairment in the workplace. The policy should:

- Include mechanisms for identifying and reporting impairment (self, others)
- Outline arrangements for confidentiality
- State if an item or substance is allowed on the premise, and if so, under what circumstances
- Provide training to employees, supervisors and managers
- List any available assistance, such as an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) or other resources
- If applicable, describe under what circumstances drug testing will be administered
- Explain how disciplinary action will be taken, when necessary
- Describe when accommodation will be considered

As well, human rights laws in most jurisdictions require that employers accommodate employees with medical needs or disabilities (including disabilities from substance dependence).

Q: How do I recognize if someone is impaired?

Signs that someone may be impaired at work include:

- Personality changes or erratic behavior, such as more interpersonal conflicts or overreacting to criticism
- Odour of alcohol or drugs on their breathe or clothes
- Glassy or red eyes, unsteady gait, slurring, poor coordination
- Consistent lateness, absenteeism or reduced productivity or quality of work

The effects of cannabis on the body can include:

- Dizziness, drowsiness, fatigue, headache
- Impaired memory, and disturbances in attention, concentration and ability to think and make decisions
- Disorientation, confusion, feeling abnormal or having abnormal thoughts, feelings of unreality, feeling an extreme slowing of time
- Impairment of motor skills and perception

The effects and length of impairment can differ from person to person, and depends on several variables, including how the cannabis was consumed (e.g., inhaled or eaten), how much was consumed, and the concentration of active ingredients, such as THC (a chemical which causes the high) and CBD.

For more information visit:

Cannabis in Newfoundland and Labrador - www.gov.nl.ca/cannabis

Cannabis in Canada - <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis.html>