

Cannabis and type 1 diabetes

Cannabis use implies several short-term (e.g., impaired judgment, increased appetite and munchies) and long-term (e.g., mental health problems) risks that can affect your blood sugar management.

The only way to avoid the harmful effects of cannabis is not to use it.

If I decide to use cannabis, I seek information and take the following precautions:

1. Check my blood sugar frequently

I set alarms 1-2 hours apart to remind myself to check my blood sugar. I turn on my CGM's alarms to notify me of low or high blood sugar and treat as usual. A higher hypoglycemia alarm threshold (e.g., 4.5 mmol/L) can be set to prevent blood sugar from dropping too low.

2. Take my insulin as usual.

If I eat cannabis in the form of food (e.g., candy, baked goods), I take into account the carbohydrate content of the food when giving me my insulin.

3. Choose snacks in advance in anticipation of munchies.

This will allow me to determine in advance the amount of carbs they contain in order to facilitate the calculation during munchies. Snacks without carbs (e.g. cheese, veggies, nuts) can also be chosen to avoid hyperglycemia.

4. Don't stay alone.

I explain to the people I'm with the basics just in case (e.g., how to recognize a hypoglycemia, how to test my blood sugar, where my emergency kit is, how to administer glucagon).

5. Have my emergency kit.

It contains fast sugars, glucagon, insulin, a blood glucose and ketones meter.

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To help managing my blood sugar when I use cannabis:

- I choose cannabis with less THC, to limit the euphoric effects that can decrease my alertness to diabetes.
- I choose to vape rather than smoke or consume edibles. Using a vape is less damaging to the lungs than smoking joints or using a water pipe (bong). Also, eating foods cooked with cannabis may make it harder to avoid high blood sugar, especially if you don't take insulin for the carbohydrates they contain.
- I limit the risks by not mixing alcohol and cannabis. In addition to impairing judgment, alcohol use has a direct impact on blood glucose levels (e.g., increased risk of hypoglycemia, decreased glucagon effectiveness). It would complicated my blood sugar management.



- Do not drive under the influence of cannabis. Your reaction time and coordination may be affected for up to 6 hours after using cannabis.
- Use in moderation. Regular use of cannabis may complicate diabetes management and increase the risk of diabetes-related complications (e.g., ketoacidosis) or mental health complications (e.g., anxiety, depression and panic attacks).

Don't hesitate to talk to your care team. They will be able to help you find strategies to make cannabis use safe while optimizing your blood sugar management.

To assess your use and find help: www.toxquebec.com