

Conversation Considerations:

General / Adults



- **Be straightforward:** ask directly about cannabis use, as you would about a patient's alcohol use.
- **Motivations:** ask the patient how cannabis fits in their life and what effects they've noticed, good or bad.
- **Assess existing knowledge:** ask the patient what they already know about the risks of cannabis use.
- **Communicating risks + harm reduction together:** avoid overwhelming the patients with risk before discussing safer use strategies.
- **Gently correct misunderstandings:** if a patient says something incorrect, it is an opportunity to inform the patient
- **Validation:** the world is filled with misinformation about cannabis and opportunities to use, creating pressure / desire to try it.

Conversation Considerations: Teens



- **Short and sweet:** teens have a lower attention span and desire to listen to advice, so focus on 2-3 key risks and harm reduction tips.
- **Communication of rights:** let teens know doctor-patient confidentiality protects what they share unless there's immediate danger (like suicide intent) and clarify that things like smoking are not reportable.
- **Respect "no":** Respect older teens when they decline a discussion – you can still offer resources like the NB Lung website for them to explore on their own.
- **Facts not emotion:** fear-based messaging will not resonate with youth. Ensure that the information you provide is meaningful and rooted in fact, not emotion.
- **Ask open-ended questions:** this encourages a two-way conversation and does not discount the teen's life experiences and motivations.
- **Be their library:** point them to resources to learn about cannabis use showing risk factors for youth, as well as harm reduction strategies.

Conversation Considerations: Older Adults (50+)



- **Perceptions of Cannabis use:** many older adults may be avoiding the use of opioids for pain and instead choose to use cannabis for pain management because they believe that it is natural, organic and not harmful.
- **Stigma around cannabis use:** There is a significant stigma surrounding the use of cannabis and other substances in the older adult population; therefore, its important to approach this topic with sensitivity and consideration.
- **Ask permission:** due to potential stigma older adults may be hesitant to discuss cannabis use, so its important to ask permission and ensure they're comfortable before starting the conversation
- **Acknowledge limitation in research:** research is still in the process to fully understand the interaction of cannabis with other drugs.

Conversation Considerations: Pregnant People



- **Prenatal visits:** they may come for their prenatal visit with their children present and may feel uncomfortable to discuss cannabis use in front of them.
- **Perceptions of cannabis:** people use cannabis during pregnancy, viewing it as a natural, safer alternative to medications or as a harm reduction strategy to avoid other substances.
- **Acknowledge lack of research:** evidence of how cannabis affects pregnancy, breastfeeding, and infant development is still emerging, so it's important to communicate the current lack, but growing body, of knowledge to patients. The safest choice is to avoid cannabis use due to potential risks to the fetus.
- **Harm reduction:** In cases where the person does wish to continue cannabis use, focus on providing harm reduction strategies. It is important to emphasize the need to avoid high-THC cannabis, limit use to as infrequent as possible, and stick to low doses when feasible.