

Medical Cannabis

Adverse drug reactions, drug-drug interactions, and safety

While medical cannabis is generally safe and well tolerated, patients and providers should be aware of several common adverse effects and safety issues.

1. Common adverse effects

- a. Dizziness, dry mouth, excess sedation, anxiety, palpitations, orthostatic hypotension, and paranoia are common side effects. Start with low doses and increase slowly

2. Contraindications

- a. Medical cannabis is contraindicated in patients who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have a history of psychosis/schizophrenia

3. Cardiovascular risk

- a. Cannabis use, especially smoking cannabis, may be associated with increased risk of stroke, myocardial infarction, and coronary artery disease

4. Drug-drug interactions

- a. THC and CBD may interact with many drugs including, but not limited to, anticoagulants, tacrolimus, phenytoin, and buprenorphine
- b. Cannabis may cause excess sedation when used in combination with alcohol, benzodiazepines, opioids, or other sedating medications

5. Driving safety

- a. Cannabis use impairs driving ability. Patients should not drive for at least 8 hours after using cannabis.

6. Cannabis withdrawal

- a. Abrupt discontinuation of cannabis may result in undesirable but not dangerous effects such as insomnia, irritability, headache, and anxiety.

7. Cannabis use disorder

- a. Approximately 10% of adults using cannabis may develop cannabis use disorder.

8. Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome

- a. Regular use of high doses of cannabis may result in a syndrome of severe, intractable nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Patients may report relief from hot showers. Discontinuing cannabis use is the most effective treatment

9. Safe medication storage

- a. Advise patients to store medical cannabis, especially edible products, in the original container up and away from other food products and out of reach of children.