

# **The link between cannabis use and nicotine addiction**

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# Conclusions

Tobacco use and cannabis use are linked.

Those youth who use cannabis are at risk of becoming dependent on nicotine.

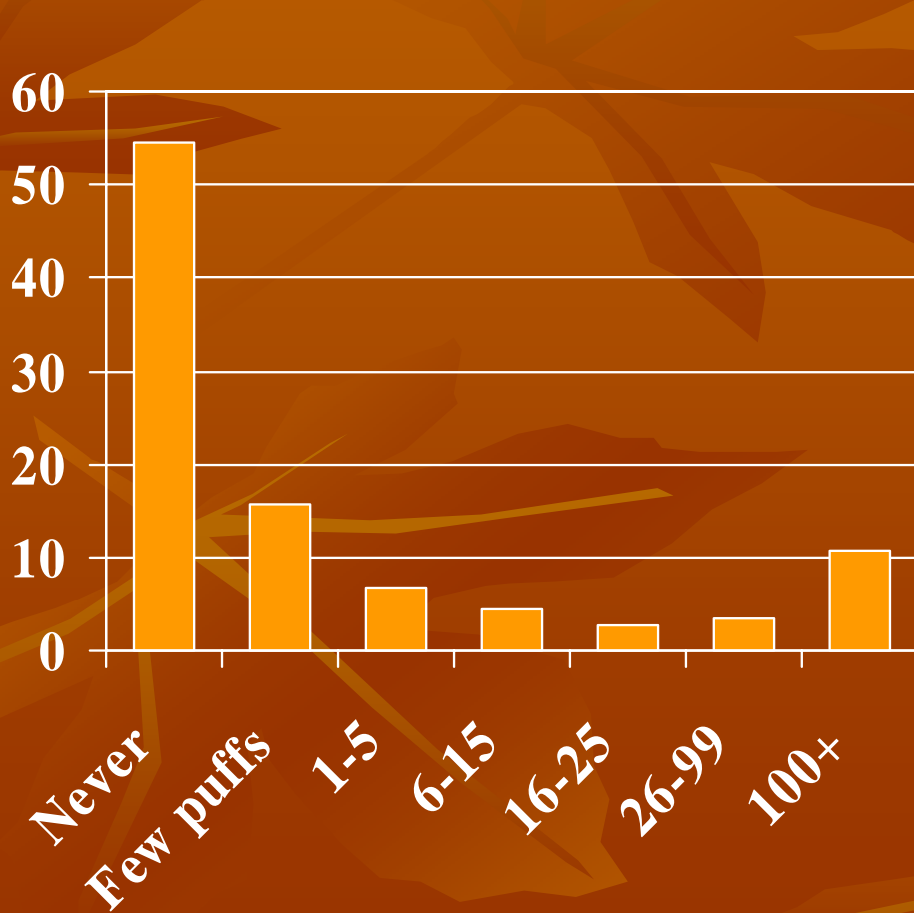
A climate of denormalization of tobacco use and normalization of cannabis use has influenced trends in teenage use.

Of particular concern is the high level of use (tobacco and cannabis) among some segments of the population.

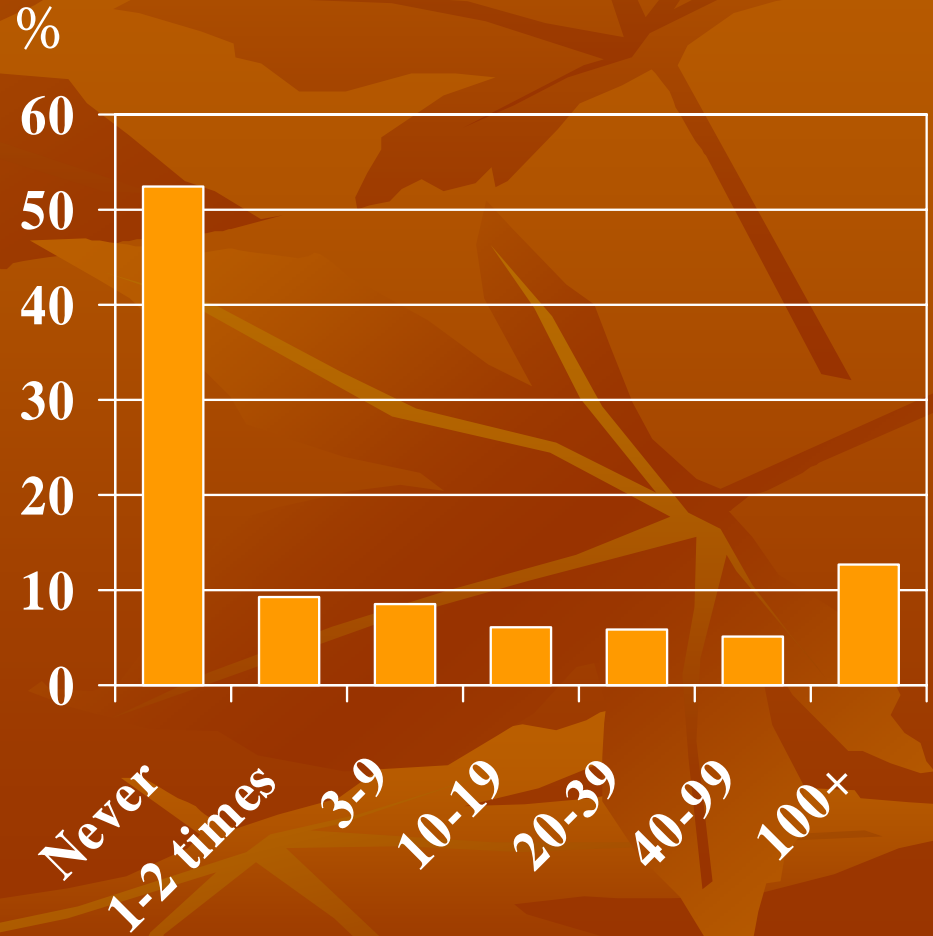
# BC Youth Survey on Smoking and Health II

- Data collected by pencil and paper or web survey between March and June 2004
- Data are not representative of all BC students – survey took place outside Vancouver and Victoria
- 49 schools in 14 school districts participated
- 8,225 students completed the survey (grades 7-12)

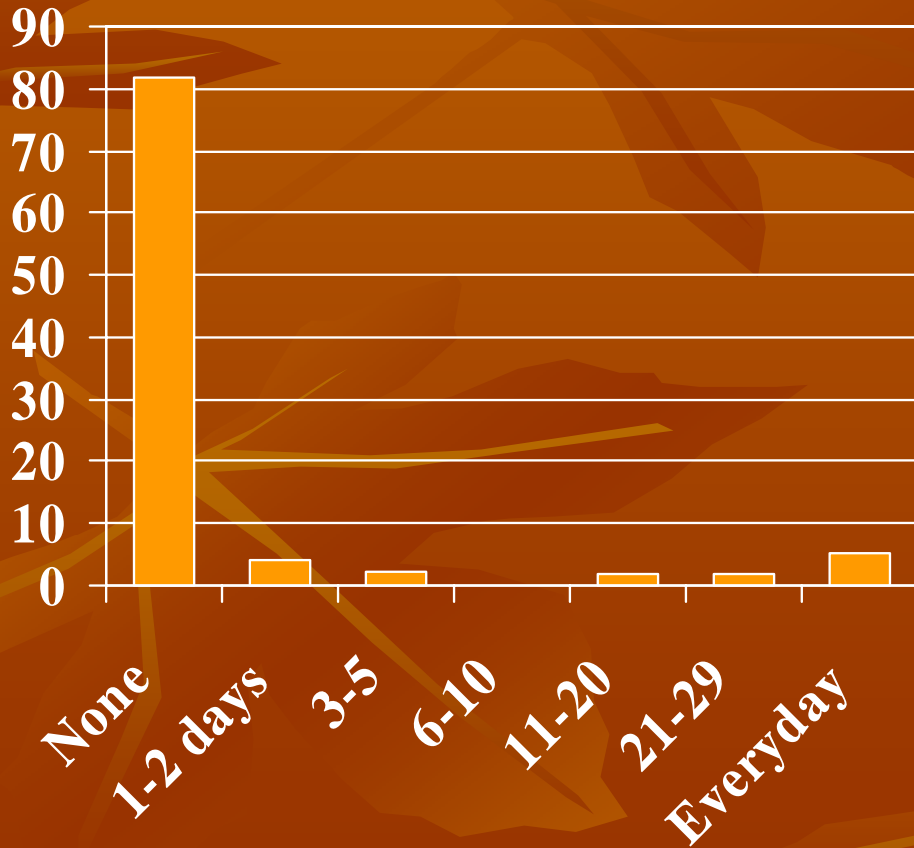
**Lifetime Tobacco Use**



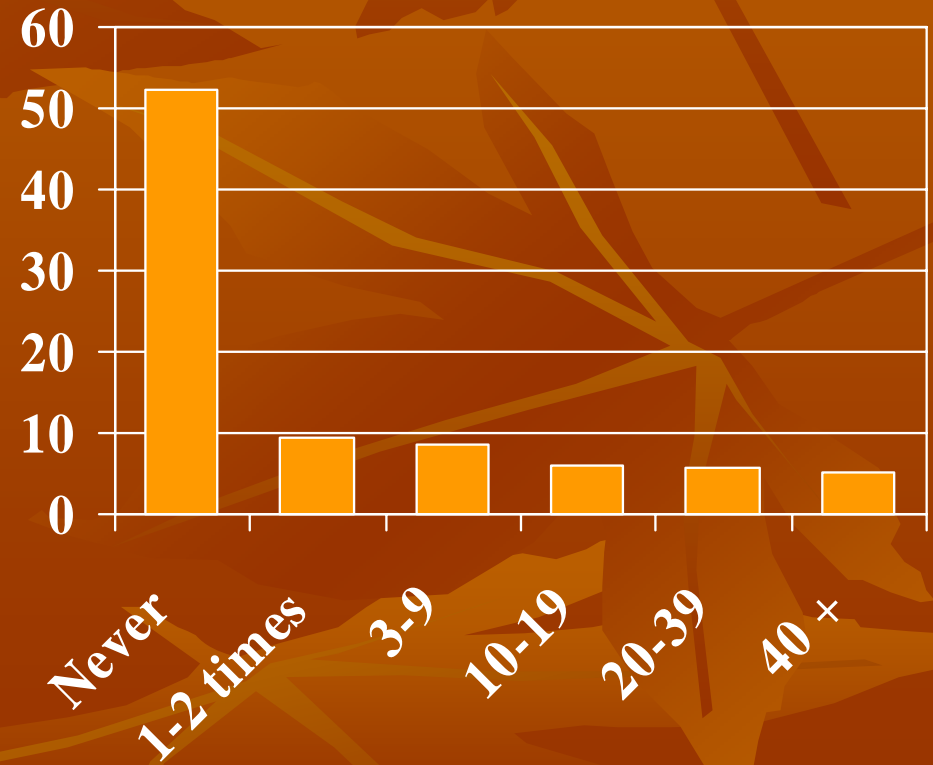
**Lifetime Cannabis Use**



**% Tobacco Use Last 30 days**



**% Cannabis Use Last 30 days**



# Relationship Between Cannabis and Tobacco Smoking

- Youth in our were 6.3 times more likely to indicate they were tobacco smokers if they also indicated they were a “pot smoker”
- Age of first whole cigarette ( $M=12.7$ ) is highly correlated with age of first experience smoking marijuana ( $M=13.1$ ) ( $r=.50$ )

# Patterns of Cannabis and Tobacco Use

3667 (44.6%)	never smoked a cigarette or used marijuana
222 (2.7%)	smoked a cigarette but never used marijuana
1785 (21.7%)	used marijuana but never smoked a cigarette
548 (6.7%)	smoked a cigarette at younger age than trying marijuana
508 (6.2%)	smoked a cigarette and used marijuana at the same age
647 (7.9%)	smoked a cigarette at an older age than trying marijuana
848 (10.3%)	missing

# Changing Rates of Cannabis and Tobacco use

- Tobacco use rates are on the **decline** in Canada
- Cannabis use appears to be on the **increase**
- Daily cannabis use:
  - Data from the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS); in 2003, 4.2% of OSDUS participants reported daily cannabis use compared to 2.5% of participants in 1999.
- Daily use appears to be more common among boys rather than girls
  - In BC the McCreary Centre Adolescent Health Surveys reported that the percentage of boys (aged 10-15+ years) that smoked cannabis 20 or more times each month was 9% in 1992, 13% in 1998, and 18% in 2003.
  - The percentage of female cannabis users that smoked 20 or more times each month was 4% in 1992, 6% in 1998, and 8% in 2003.

# Making the links

- Both cannabis and tobacco create psychoactive effects
- They are both smoked
- Cannabis and tobacco produce similar health effects (lung disease, cancer)

# Untangling the Tobacco-Cannabis Question

- What comes first tobacco or cannabis use?
- There is a correlation between tobacco use and cannabis use
- Gateway theory suggests initiation flows from tobacco and alcohol use to cannabis use
- Based on a 10-year longitudinal cohort study, Patton et al. (2005) found that cannabis operates as a “gateway” to tobacco
- Amos et al. (2002) found that pot smokers would smoke tobacco when they could not access pot

# Temporal Order of Use

- A third possibility exists and that is that there is substantial co-use of tobacco and cannabis
- Cannabis use in teens can support and reinforce a smoking habit (Highet, 2004)

# Mixing Tobacco and Cannabis

*“I don’t smoke cigarettes. I just need tobacco in my bong toke to settle my nerves”*

(17-year old male, Nelson)

*“I am a splif smoker – tobacco mixed with pot.”*

(15-year old female from the Kootenays; smoked marijuana 40 or more times in the past month)

# The “after-toke”

*“I have planned since I was 5-years old to never touch a cigarette, but sometimes after you smoke pot there is an after-toke with cigarettes, that is the only time a lot of people smoke cigarettes, including myself.”*

(15-year old male, Nelson, BC)

# The “Cover”

*“I think a lot of people use the cigarette smell to cover up the marijuana smell.” (18-year old male, Port Alberni)*

# The Trace Study

Qualitative study focused on the culture of frequent marijuana use in teens

Three communities: Port Alberni, Nelson, Vancouver

**Trace**

Teens Report on Adolescent Cannabis Experiences

# Making the Connection

*“I didn’t start smoking weed because I was smoking cigarettes. But the person who did smoke weed with me for the first time did smoke cigarettes as well and I used to smoke cigarettes with him all the time. So maybe that’s a deep link.” (17-year old female, Port Alberni)*

# Substitutions

*“Like there were times where I’ve quit and I’ve tried to substitute my nicotine addiction with marijuana, eh? And that didn’t necessarily help my situation with how much I would crave marijuana or my dependency level on marijuana. And there’s times where I have felt a little bit addicted because of that, right? Trying to use marijuana to forget about nicotine, I’ve tried to quit cigarettes quite a few times and it’s never been successful.” (18-year old male Port Alberni)*

# Programming Links

- Gains in tobacco control can yield “losses” in drug control (tobacco is difficult to access and has been “denormalised”).
- Many teens now understand the message that the tobacco in cigarettes are full of chemicals and that the big tobacco companies are trying to manipulate them.
- In many cases, cannabis is assumed by youth to be a “safe” and an accessible alternative to tobacco.

# What Teens Are Telling Us

*“At least marijuana is a natural thing. When you’re smoking cigarettes it’s like all the shit under the sink and whatever you can find, rat poison, everything’s in cigarettes” (17-year old male, Port Alberni).*

*“For pot, to me it’s not a drug. It’s an herb, because a drug is man made. God made pot, man beer, who do you trust?” (16-year old female, Port Alberni)*

# Marijuana is the “New Tobacco”

*Well I smoke it every morning so I can actually get out of bed... and it gives me that boost of energy to just get up and get ready for school. I drive to school with a couple of friends and we'll smoke a couple of joints and then I'll be stoned for lunch and half way through I'll be burnt out and then once the class starts, I'll be normal again, I won't be high or anything. And then after school, I'll smoke some or a alot [laughs] depending on the day, and then at night I'll have a bowl to myself and go to sleep. (16-year old female, Port Alberni)*

# Cannabis: Shifting Trends in Acceptance

*“We used to hide the fact, you know. We’d go down to the woods or a little cubby hole where no one could see us or whatever and get stoned. Nowadays, it’s so nonchalant that we can, we can stand on the busiest street corner in town and just toké and leave, and nobody cares.” (18 year-old male, Port Alberni)*

# The “Normalization” of Cannabis

*“You should consider a questionnaire about marijuana smoking because I know that at my school many more people smoke pot than cigarettes.”*

*(14-year old female, Duncan, BC)*

*“Lots of teenagers smoke and smoke pot because there’s nothing else to do in Chilliwack! Nothing ever goes on! And it’s BC! The best!”*

*(17-year old female)*

# The Dependency Syndrome

- Many attributes considered the hallmarks of tobacco dependence are reflected in youth marijuana use:
  - Smoking upon waking (“wake and bake”)
  - Tolerance
  - Craving
  - Considerable effort spent acquiring the drug

# The tangled use of tobacco and cannabis

- Teens are mixing tobacco with cannabis in bongos and joints
- Teens “practise” smoking with cigarettes to gain experience before cannabis use
- Teens smoke cigarettes while high on cannabis
- Concomitant cannabis and tobacco use may have the unwanted side-effect of higher levels of nicotine dependence (Amos et al., 2004)

# Challenges for the Future

- Teens are currently receiving a number of mixed messages about cannabis use (decriminalization, medical marijuana)
- We need to develop clear messages that help youth understand the possible effects of use
- We need to track the links between cannabis and tobacco use
- Programmers need to move beyond being concerned with a single substance.