

Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome

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- Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome (CHS) is a condition that can happen to anyone who uses cannabis (marijuana), especially people who use it regularly.
- Researchers and health care teams are just starting to understand more about CHS. The signs and symptoms can be the same as other medical conditions, so it can be hard to diagnose.
- People with CHS often have severe (very bad) nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) and vomiting (throwing up) that is hard to control. They may vomit more than 20 times a day and it may last for more than 24 hours (1 day). Other symptoms of CHS include:
 - › Stomach pain
 - › Anxiety
 - › Constipation (not being able to poop)
 - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
 - › Being very thirsty
 - › Sweating
 - › Dry mouth

Not using cannabis is the only way to prevent CHS.

How is CHS treated?

- The best way to prevent and treat CHS is by not using cannabis. If you keep using cannabis, your symptoms will get worse and may come back even if they have stopped.
- You may feel better if you:
 - › Take a hot shower or bath.
 - › Drink a lot of water.
 - › Ask your loved ones for support or talk to a counsellor.
 - › Stop using cannabis.
- If you are worried about your symptoms, see your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or go to the nearest Emergency Department.
 - › If you have nausea and vomiting that lasts for a long time, you may need to take medication or have intravenous (I.V.) fluids.
 - › You may also need medication for anxiety.

These treatments do not work for everyone with CHS. Some people find that only a hot shower or bath will stop their symptoms. It is important to know what makes your symptoms better or worse, so you get the best care possible.

What will happen if I stop using cannabis?

- When you use cannabis regularly, your body and brain become dependent on it (get used to having it).
- If you are dependent on cannabis, you may have symptoms of withdrawal when you stop taking it. Withdrawal symptoms may include:
 - › Feeling nervous, angry, or depressed
 - › Trouble relaxing
 - › Feeling very tired
 - › Trouble sleeping
 - › Trouble concentrating
 - › Chills
 - › Shaking
 - › Sweating a lot
 - › Headaches or stomach pain
 - › Weight loss (if you do not feel like eating)

What should I do if I need help?

Call 911 if:

- › You want to hurt yourself or someone else.
- › You have trouble breathing or are breathing very fast.
- › You have chest pain, or a fast heartbeat and pounding in your chest that will not stop.
- › You have a seizure (sudden electrical brain activity that can change how you act, move, or feel for a short time).
- › You hallucinate (see or feel things that are not there).

See your primary health care provider or call 811 if:

- › You feel dizzy.
- › You cannot keep any fluids down because you are vomiting.
- › You have had treatment for CHS, but you have new symptoms or your symptoms are getting worse.

- If you need support to stop using cannabis:
 - › Talk to a health care provider about drug counselling programs.
 - › Call the Mental Health and Addictions helpline at (toll-free) 1-855-922-1122.
- For health advice and general health information, 24 hours, 7 days a week, call 811 to talk to a registered nurse.

Notes:

The information in this pamphlet is for informational and educational purposes only. The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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