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Navigating Cannabis Conversations

Asking about cannabis use when obtaining a medication history can help identify:

- drug–drug interactions with other medications, and
- cannabis-related conditions (e.g., cannabis hyperemesis syndrome¹) or poisonings (instances of which are increasing among older adults and children²) in a timely manner.

Incident Description

A patient presented to the emergency department with persistent nausea and vomiting. The underlying cause was unknown. After a number of tests, the pharmacist asked the patient about cannabis use. The patient was later diagnosed with cannabis hyperemesis syndrome.



Considerations When Inquiring about Medications, Including Cannabis Use

- **Create a safe space.** Have conversations in a private, enclosed area for confidentiality.
- **Use an interview guide to support the conversation.** An updated [Best Possible Medication History \(BPMH\) Interview Guide](#)³ incorporates nonjudgemental and caring language.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** For example, “Can you show me the cannabis products that you take? Can you describe how, how much, and how often you take them?”
 - Be mindful of language, tone, and approach. Avoid stigmatizing terms (e.g., user).⁴
 - Document the type(s) of cannabis taken and the quantity, as well as the cannabidiol:tetrahydrocannabinol (CBD:THC) ratio, where possible.

Additional Information to Share with Patients

- BPMH Interview Guide newsletter: <https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/bpmh.html>
- Cannabis safety in older adults: <https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/cannabis-older-adults.html>

References

1. Frequent vomiting from use of cannabis (pot/marijuana). Toronto (ON): Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada; 2020 [cited 2024 Aug 7].
2. Stall NM, Shi S, Malikov K, Wang S, Rochon PA, Hillmer MP, et al. Edible cannabis legalization and cannabis poisonings in older adults. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2024;184(7):840-842.
3. Best Possible Medication History interview guide. Toronto (ON): Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada; 2024 [cited 2024 Sep 19].
4. Stigma: why words matter. Ottawa (ON): Public Health Agency of Canada; 2022 [cited 2024 Dec 2].