

Best Practices for Health Warning Labels on Marijuana Products

1. Excerpts from published research on health warning labels and their effectiveness

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[Perceptions of effectiveness and believability of pictorial and text-only health warning labels for cannabis products among Canadian youth](#)

Summary

This study provides the first empirical test of cannabis health warnings. "Overall, 87.7% of respondents supported having health warnings on cannabis products, and 84.0% supported the inclusion of a Quitline number on cannabis health warnings. "Pictorial warnings were perceived as more effective and believable than text-only warnings."

[US young adults' perceived effectiveness of draft pictorial e-cigarette warning labels | Tobacco Control](#) (published in *BMJ*):2018

Summary

For all outcomes, pictorial warnings were ranked higher than the text-only warning, and the warning using a yellow triangle caution icon was ranked highest for all outcomes. The text-only warning was ranked as the least likely to be effective for all four outcomes in which it was assessed. Trends were similar for current e-cigarette users and non-users.

[Noticing of cannabis health warning labels in Canada and the US](#) *Health Promotion Chronic Disease Prevention Canada*. 2021 Aug; 41(7-8): 201–210.

Summary

This study found that individuals were more likely to report noticing warning messages after they were mandated. Regular users were also more likely to notice them than infrequent users.

[Do Mandatory Health Warning Labels on Consumer Products Increase Recall of the Health Risks of Cannabis?](#), *Substance Use & Misuse*, DOI: 10.1080/10826084.2021.2023186

Summary

This Canadian study concluded, "Awareness of specific warning messages was higher in jurisdictions where the associated warning was mandated on packages, suggesting that warning labels may improve knowledge of cannabis-related health risks."

[Perceptions of plain packaging and health warning labels for cannabis among young adults: findings from an experimental study.](#) *BMC Public Health* **18**, 1361 (2018).

Summary

"Warning messages for cognitive development and impaired driving were rated highest on levels of perceived effectiveness, believability, and fear, whereas the addiction warning was rated among the lowest." It also found products without warning labels were deemed more appealing than products with them.

[California Cannabis Markets—Why Industry-Friendly Regulation Is Not Good Public Health](#) *JAMA Health Forum*. 2022;3(7)

Excerpt

A commentary in *JAMA Health Forum* mentioned, "Yes, California state policies include package warnings about use in pregnancy and during adolescence. However, the warnings are printed in size 6-point font and relegated to less-visible or even hidden placements. More prominent warnings, like those required globally for tobacco, could help alert consumers to potential health risks of cannabis use, particularly for youth, and of exposure to cannabis in utero."

National Safety Council Position on Cannabis Labeling

[The National Safety Council \(NSC\) supports explicit, clear, detailed labeling for all cannabis derived products](#)

The first recommendation of a National Transportation Safety Board report is "A requirement that cannabis products have a warning label about driving impairment." [NTSB Report Finds Alcohol and Cannabis Are Primary Drugs Detected in Impaired Drivers](#)

2. Findings

- a. Graphic warning labels instead of text warning labels are more effective and a best practice for displaying warning labels. The yellow caution triangle background is recommended.
- b. Some of the warning labels may require both graphics and text to be effective.
- c. In addition, all cannabis outlets (medical or retail) should be required to display posters visible to all patrons with the recommended health warnings.

3. Best Practice Recommendations

- A. In light of scientific literature on the harms of marijuana, create 11 health warning label graphic images using the yellow triangle or yellow background if the triangle is not a graphic fit. Some graphics will need to use words.

Marijuana use can cause or contribute to:

1. Psychosis
2. Impaired driving
3. Addiction
4. Harm to fetuses/not to be used by pregnant women
5. Harm to nursing babies/ not to be used by women breastfeeding
6. Suicide attempt
7. Uncontrollable vomiting
8. Cardiac risks such as stroke, arrhythmia and cardiomyopathy
9. Risk for bronchitis, COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), and pneumothorax.

Additionally

10. No use under 21 years of age
11. Harmful to pets
12. Cannabis products containing over 10% THC should carry a high potency warning
13. Not approved by the FDA

Notes:

- These warning label graphics should be printed on all marijuana packaging, both medical and retail.

- B. Develop posters that include all graphic warnings required to be displayed at all retail and medical marijuana points of sale in full sight of customers.

- C. Include resources and quitline on all cannabis packaging.

4. Examples

Perceptions of effectiveness and believability of pictorial and text-only health warning labels for cannabis products among Canadian youth



Edited by SAM from: [US young adults' perceived effectiveness of draft pictorial e-cigarette warning labels | Tobacco Control](#) (published in *BMJ*):2018

