

Media Release



Increased Use of Alcohol and Cannabis During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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According to a recent survey, 1 in 5 Canadians say they have increased the amount of alcohol they drink while spending more time at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, the increases were noted in 21.1% of Canadians from ages 18-34, 24.5% of Canadians ages 35-54, and 9.7% of Canadians aged 55 or older.

These changes in drinking patterns have been uncovered by a Nanos poll commissioned by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA). The poll also found that the main reasons for the increase are a lack of regular schedule, boredom, stress, and the increased quantity of alcohol kept at home in recent months.

The Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) and the Canadian Mental Health Association Cochrane-Timiskaming branch (CMHA-CT) have joined forces to increase the public's awareness on why they might be turning to alcohol and cannabis during the pandemic. They also want people to know that help is available.

There are many health and social risks associated with increased alcohol and substance use. For example, it can affect the immune system which increases chances of being infected with COVID-19 when exposed to the virus and worsens the symptoms. THU and CMHA-CT are encouraging those who are turning to alcohol and other substances to help relieve stress and anxiety to assess their risk using Canada's Lower Risk Guidelines for alcohol and cannabis use.

"People sometimes drink more alcohol and use substances to help them cope with stress and anxiety," explains Dr Glenn Corneil, Acting Medical Officer of Health for Timiskaming. "COVID-19 has reminded us of something that has always been important: to be mindful of how much and how often you are using substances, including alcohol, and their impact on your life and on the people around you."

Paul Jalbert, Executive Director of the CMHA-CT, urges those who are concerned to reach out to local support services: "To anyone concerned with their alcohol or substance usage, reach out. There are several services in place to support you. You are not alone, and you don't need to deal with this alone."

THU and CMHA-CT encourage the public to visit their Facebook pages and websites (www.timiskaminghu.com and <https://cmhact.ca>) to find available local community supports, and online supports to help with addictions and mental health.

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