

LET'S TALK ABOUT CANNABIS

If you feel confused about the terms **cannabis, THC, marijuana, CBD, and their effects, you are not alone.** The quickly evolving landscape around cannabis has made it difficult to keep track of health claims, risks, and regulations. **We hope to give some clarity on these issues as well as recommendations for further resources that are up to date, easily accessible, and evidence based.**

LET'S START WITH SOME BASICS

Cannabis, sometimes referred to as **marijuana**, is a plant with more than 100 chemical compounds called cannabinoids, of which THC and CBD are the most common.

THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is the psychoactive compound that produces the "high" that many people associate with cannabis. There are three FDA-approved synthetic cannabis-related drug products. Cesamet™ can be used to treat nausea and vomiting caused by cancer and chemotherapy, as can Marinol® and Syndros®, which can also treat loss of appetite and weight loss in people who have HIV/AIDS.

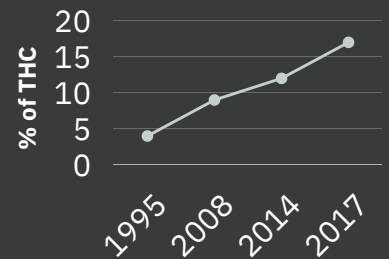
CBD (cannabidiol) is another compound found in cannabis and does not produce a "high". There has been much interest in CBD in recent years regarding potential health benefits. So far only one cannabis-derived product has been granted FDA approval, Epidiolex®, which is used to treat seizures in individuals with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, Dravet syndrome, and tuberous sclerosis complex.

WHAT ABOUT POTENCY?

Cannabis potency, or the % of THC in a product, has risen steadily for years.

Conversely, the concentration of CBD in cannabis that is typically available in the U.S. has remained minimal and relatively unchanged.

Cannabis Potency 1995-2017



A great variety of cannabis products are available, including concentrates and edibles, that are even higher potency, between 40-80% THC. Additionally, many products do not list their potency (see regulation section, left) and most edibles do not provide a "serving size".

The potential impacts of these high potency products will not be known for some time, but we know from years of data that cannabis use increases risk for neurocognitive deficits, dependence, and can precipitate or worsen some mental health disorders.

ARE CANNABIS PRODUCTS REGULATED?

UNFORTUNATELY, NO, NOT REALLY.

Cannabis-derived and cannabis-related products have been approved for a small number of medical uses. **Although products in states that have legalized medical and/or recreational cannabis often list a variety of medicinal or therapeutic uses, they have not been approved by the FDA.** It's important for consumers to realize that the FDA has **not** required testing of "medicinal cannabis" products for their safety or therapeutic value.

The FDA is particularly concerned that consumers might use CBD products in place of approved treatments for medical conditions. Even delaying approved treatment through the use of these products can have dangerous consequences.

Another concern is that some cannabis-derived products list inaccurate amounts of cannabinoids contained within them. A 2017 analysis of products containing CBD that were being sold online found that 26% contained significantly less CBD than was stated, with 43% containing more.

HOW DO I STAY UP TO DATE?

FIRST, YOU NEED TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.

Cannabis information evolves rapidly, so it's best to bookmark some trusted resources that are objective and evidence based.

When evaluating a source, make sure the information is fact based rather than opinion based or anecdotal. If a website or other resource has a motivation to sell you something, they are unlikely to be a reliable source. **As a general rule, these organizations have up-to-date information based on the latest research: FDA, NIDA, SAMHSA, and NIH.**

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