Can CBD Oil Help Manage Multiple Sclerosis Symptoms?

by JOSH DUVAUCHELLE

CBD Oil for MS

Every single week, another 200 people in the United States are diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The diagnosis can feel crushing and hopeless, but new research is unveiling a potentially new potent treatment that can give you or a loved one you know some much-needed hope: Cannabidiol oil (CBD oil).

What Is CBD Oil?

Medical marijuana has two major active ingredients: Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). The latter is the second most prevalent in medical marijuana, and while it has very strong medical effects, none of CBD's effects are psychoactive. In other words, while it comes from marijuana, it won't get you "high." At least not in the traditional sense.

This comes as welcome relief to those who are still wary of marijuana. In fact, CBD oil typically does not contain THC (the active ingredient associated with marijuana highs).

"In humans, CBD exhibits no effects indicative of any abuse or dependence potential," reports the World Health Organization. "To date, there is no evidence of public health-related problems associated with the use of pure CBD."

Is CBD Oil Legal?

Even though CBD comes from medical marijuana, it may still be legal in states that haven't legalized marijuana itself. Unfortunately, the laws and regulations leave much to be desired in terms of clarity on this issue.

All 50 states in the U.S. have legalized CBD, but the restrictions surrounding its use vary widely, which – along with the unclear federal regulations – leaves many consumers with multiple sclerosis (MS) confused.

It doesn't help that some CBD medical supplements come from legal hemp, and not marijuana, which further clouds the picture.

If you're considering using CBD oil for MS, consult a legal professional on your options.

The Benefits and Uses of CBD Oil for MS

One in five people with MS told the MS Society that they use CBD oil or other marijuana products for their MS. According to the society, some of the most common benefits include reduced stiffness, lower levels of pain, and fewer muscle spasms.

"I've been using [CBD] for close to eight months now, and I can honestly say it's made a huge difference in my

life," says Devin Garlit, an MS patient who shared his story with Multiplesclerosis.net. He found it impacted his MS symptoms when he used it regularly.

"When I take it every day, or even close to every day, my body is much better off," notes Garlit. "Less pain, less spasticity, and less fatigue. Hard to believe, even for me. This is one of the few things I've taken where I've had multiple people come up and asked me if anything changed, because they can see that I am out more and I am more active."

New research – of which there is admittedly not a lot, due to the relatively recent legality surrounding medical marijuana and CBD – continues to back Garlit's experience as more than just anecdotal.

Documented benefits, according to published medical studies, include:

- CBD oil, administered as an oral spray to 368 patients with multiple sclerosis, "significantly reduced neuropathic pain, spasticity, muscle spasms and sleep disturbances."
- CBD oil protects against the effects of chronic inflammation, which plays a role in MS. "Our findings," note the study, "highlight the anti-inflammatory effects of CBD in this viral model of MS and demonstrate the significant therapeutic potential of this compound for the treatment of pathologies with an inflammatory component."
- CBD oil may help to "counteract the development of experimental multiple sclerosis (MS)" by affecting the pathways in immune cells.
- CBD may help with MS pain. Specifically, it may be "effective in improving MS-related neuropathic pain, maybe through its action on specific cortical pathways."

And the list goes on!

Risks and Side Effects of CBD Oil

Just because it's "natural" doesn't mean it is risk-free. While many people claim that CBD oil is safe, some people may have adverse side effects. This may include mood changes, such as irritability, as well as fatigue and nausea.

Before taking any supplement or treatment, it's always important to discuss your options and your plans with your doctor or medical professional. This is especially true if you're already on other medications, as medications that are "safe" on their own may affect other drugs in your system.

For example, if you're on some blood thinners, CBD oil can raise your blood levels of these medications.

The other potential issue is manufacturing and potency. "A significant safety concern with CBD is that it is primarily marketed and sold as a supplement, not a medication," warns Harvard Medical School. "Currently, the FDA does not regulate the safety and purity of dietary supplements. So you cannot know for sure that the product you buy has active ingredients at the dose listed on the label. Also, the product may contain other (unknown) elements. We also don't know the most effective therapeutic dose of CBD for any particular medical condition."

If you're considering CBD oil for MS, (i.e., to treat stiffness, pain and muscle spasms) work with your medical professionals to create a plan that's safe for you and your personal MS journey.

Resources

Multiple Sclerosis Discovery Forum (Map of MS Prevalence)

World Health Organization (Cannabidiol (CBD))

Federal Register (Establishment of a New Drug Code for Marihuana Extract)

Multiple Sclerosis Society UK (Cannabis)

MultipleSclerosis.net (CBD From Hemp and How It’s Helped My MS)

National Institutes of Health (Sativex for the management of multiple sclerosis symptoms.)

National Institutes of Health (Cannabidiol provides long-lasting protection against the deleterious effects of inflammation in a viral model of multiple sclerosis: a role for A2A receptors.)

Harvard Health Publishing (Cannabidiol (CBD) — what we know and what we don’t)

National Institutes of Health (Target regulation of PI3K/Akt/mTOR pathway by cannabidiol in treatment of experimental multiple sclerosis.)

National Institutes of Health (Evaluating Sativex® in Neuropathic Pain Management: A Clinical and Neurophysiological Assessment in Multiple Sclerosis.)