

From the Desk of
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Medical Marijuana

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Introduction

Medicinal cannabinoids, or medical marijuana, has made its way into mainstream health care and medicine. While the use of cannabis for medical purposes is nothing new, its popularity and increasing acceptance is new, especially for the treatment of chronic pain, seizures, cancer and end of life complications. Dozens upon dozens of books have been written and continue to be written about the medicinal qualities of marijuana, the symptoms and disorders that can be improved through its use, and how to properly and effectively use it. There is a complex science around medical marijuana, so this article is meant to make the complicated simple.

Medicinal Qualities of Marijuana

The chemistry of cannabis is very complicated, so much so, that there are over 400 chemicals in marijuana. Roughly 80 of these chemicals are unique to the cannabis plant, and these are known as cannabinoids. Major cannabinoids include cannabidiol (CBD) and cannabinol (CBN). Cannabidiol is an oil found in the cannabis sativa plant and has no euphoric effects whatsoever. CBD is only 1 of 144 cannabinoid oils that are found in the cannabis plant. It is now being sold as an oil that can be used for a number of symptoms and disorders. Cannabinoids bind to cannabinoid receptors in our body and brain. They provide protective effects against inflammation in the brain.

Research has shown that CBD protects against the development of diabetes, certain types of cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and brain and nerve damage due to stroke. It may also help with alcoholism, nausea, inflammatory bowel disease and Huntington's disease. CBD is being used as an anti-anxiety, anti-epileptic, and neuro-protective agent. It is also a potent anti-oxidant, which protects against chemical damage due to oxidation.

CBN, on the other hand, has no euphoric effects and has anti-inflammatory properties. It may promote bone growth and is an alternative to sleeping medications. The chemical in marijuana that does have the most euphoric or psychoactive effect is tetrahydrocannabinol or THC, which is generally not recommended for treatment or symptom management.

Endocannabinoids are cannabinoid receptors in the central nervous system and brain. Along with related enzymes, these make up the endocannabinoid system. This system is essential for life and relates messages that affect how we eat, sleep and relax. Life would not be the same without them. Simply put, our bodies are receptive to cannabinoids in a very natural way.

Disorders and Symptoms Improved by Medical Marijuana

Research continues to discover clinical applications for cannabis and cannabinoids. Medical marijuana has been used for some time to treat chronic pain associated with many diseases, including various types of cancer as well as the nausea that accompanies chemotherapy. It has been discovered that it stops breast cancer from spreading, reduces tumor growth and kills brain cancer cells. Medical marijuana also reduces tumors and slows growth of lung cancer and leukemia. Medical marijuana has been found to ease spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis.

Certain neurological disorders may be improved with medical marijuana including bipolar disorder, different types of depression, autism, epilepsy, and Parkinson's disease. It can increase concentration among those who have ADHD and can help prevent Alzheimer's plaques from forming in the brain. Medical marijuana may also be helpful in managing diabetes, radiation exposure, loss of consciousness, and schizophrenia.

Other conditions improved by medical marijuana:

- Crohn's disease
- Glaucoma
- Tourette's syndrome
- Terminal illness
- Wasting from terminal illness
- Fibromyalgia
- PTSD

- Hepatitis C
- Spinal cord injury
- Ulcerative colitis
- Arthritis
- Migraines
- Neuropathic pain
- Pancreatitis
- Restless leg syndrome

End of Life Care and Medical Marijuana

Research has established that the use of medical marijuana can provide a variety of positive benefits for people who are receiving end of life care. It can be an alternative to opioids to reduce pain and suffering. It can reduce anxiety and depression experienced by many at the end of their lives. Nausea and vomiting, muscle pain and spasms, sleeping problems and appetite can all be improved through the use of medical marijuana. Families may find relief that their loved ones are in better spirits and are not suffering as much as they might using traditional medicine.

Methods of Using Medical Marijuana

Medical marijuana comes in many forms including:

- Pills
- Oils
- Vaporized liquids
- Nasal sprays
- Dried leaves and buds
- Whole plant

Smoking it is by far the worst way to get the medicinal effects because 90% of it is lost through exhaling and releasing it into the air. Vaporizing and eating it appear to be the most effective ways to get the medicine into the body's systems. It can be cooked into foods or made into smoothies and teas. Transdermal oils can also be very effective and applied topically on the skin. Regardless of how it is used, medical marijuana seems to be making a positive difference in people's lives as they struggle with various symptoms and disorders.

Disclaimer: This article is for educational purposes only and is not meant to provide medical advice.