

# Cannabis and mental health



Understanding the endocannabinoid system is essential to understanding how cannabis may affect mental health, says **Thomas Walker**. Never self-medicate, but rather always consult a doctor first.

For a while now, there's been growing interest in the connection between cannabis and mental health.

Endocannabinoids, or body-produced cannabinoids, enzymes and receptors make up the complex network known as the endocannabinoid system (ECS), which controls a variety of physiological activities. It is essential for preserving homeostasis (stability) in the body.

The significance of the ECS increases when it comes to mental health. According to studies, the ECS helps to control mood, anxiety and stress reactions. It does this by controlling the release of neurotransmitters, which have a significant effect on mental and emotional states.

For example, depression can affect the working of the ECS. Restoring ECS balance may lessen symptoms of depression.

Cannabinoids from the cannabis plant, such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), can interact with the ECS by binding to cannabinoid receptors.

The psychoactive component of cannabis, THC, binds largely to cannabinoid 1 receptors. This causes intoxication and modifies mood and perception.

CBD interacts with the ECS in a more complicated way, altering receptor activation and boosting the body's own endocannabinoids.

## DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Depression and anxiety are two of the most common mental health conditions worldwide. According to some research, CBD may reduce anxiety symptoms through interacting with serotonin receptors, which are crucial

for controlling mood. Additionally, CBD may help to lessen anxiety due to its potential anti-inflammatory qualities.

When using cannabis to treat anxiety, it is important to exercise caution as some people may have worsening anxiety symptoms when exposed to THC-rich strains, especially at larger doses.

After enduring a traumatic experience, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a serious mental health condition, may manifest. Some PTSD sufferers claim medical marijuana helps to reduce their symptoms. More clinical trials are required to determine the effectiveness and safety of cannabis as a treatment for PTSD, because the research is still in its early phases.

## CANNABIS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE SOME PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH WHEN USED SENSIBLY

The mood swings associated with bipolar disorder include episodes of mania and depression. According to research, cannabis use, especially during manic periods, may *increase* bipolar symptoms. Therefore, people with bipolar disorder should consume cannabis sparingly and consult their doctor before doing so.

Schizophrenia is a serious and complicated mental illness. There's evidence to suggest that frequent cannabis usage, particularly with high-THC strains, may increase the risk of schizophrenia or cause psychotic episodes in people who are already prone to these. Cannabis use should be avoided by people with

a family history of schizophrenia or other psychotic diseases.

The state of your mental health may be significantly affected by insomnia and other sleep disorders.

Some people claim that using cannabis, particularly strains with higher CBD content, has helped their sleep patterns. Long-term cannabis usage, however, may cause tolerance and dependency, which could exacerbate sleep disorders over time.

## USING CANNABIS AS A COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY

While there is still much to learn about the relationship between cannabis and mental health, it is crucial to think of cannabis as a complementary therapy rather than a stand-alone treatment for mental health issues. Because mental health illnesses are complicated, comprehensive care should be provided, including psychotherapy, counselling and, if required, medication.

Consult with a mental health specialist or your GP before using cannabis for mental health issues.

In conclusion, there are several facets to the connection between cannabis and mental health, and there may be both advantages and disadvantages depending on a number of variables.

That said, cannabis has the potential to improve some people's mental health when used sensibly and carefully. It should, however, be addressed mindfully and with awareness of individual requirements and circumstances as it is not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution.

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