

# Cannabis and Diabetes

Cannabis, or marijuana, is a drug derived from the cannabis plant that is used for recreational use, medicinal purposes and religious or spiritual rites.

Cannabis plants produce a unique family of compounds called cannabinoids. Of these, the major psychoactive (brain function-affecting) compound is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

Marijuana contains high levels of THC, as well as other psychoactive chemicals, which produce the 'high' users feel when inhaling or ingesting it.

## **History of cannabis**

Cannabis has been used by humans for thousands of years, with the earliest record of its use dating back to the 3rd millennium BC.

It is indigenous to Central and South Asia, and is believed to of been used by many ancient civilizations, particularly as a form of medicine or herbal therapy.

## **Cannabis drug class**

Laws regarding the production, possession, use and sale of cannabis came into effect in the early 20th century.

But despite being illegal in most countries, including the UK, its use as a recreational drug is still very common.

In fact it is the most used illicit drug in the world, according to the United Nations, with approximately 22.5 million adults across the globe estimated to use marijuana on a daily basis.

## **Legal status**

In the UK, cannabis is categorized as a Class B drug under the UK Misuse of Drugs Act.

Individuals caught in possession of these drugs are therefore given more lenient punishment - often confiscation and a 'cannabis warning' for small amounts.

## **Effects of cannabis**

### **Cannabis on the Forum**

Cannabis causes a number of noticeable but mild (in comparison with other recreational drugs) physical and mental. These include:

- Increased pulse rate
- Dry mouth
- Increased appetite
- Bloodshot eyes
- Light-headedness
- Occasional dizzy spells
- Problems with memory, concentration, perception and coordinated movement

Pro-cannabis groups and campaigners often highlight its pain relief benefits and stress the fact that not one cannabis-related death has ever been recorded.

### **Cannabis and its effect on diabetes**

There is growing research investigating cannabis use and the effects on diabetes.

#### **Possible benefits of cannabis**

However, some studies, albeit animal-based ones, in recent years have highlighted a number of potential health benefits of cannabis for diabetics.

A research paper published by the American Alliance for Medical Cannabis (AAMC) suggested that cannabis can help:

- Stabilise blood sugars - a large body of anecdotal evidence is building among diabetics to support this.
  - Suppress some of the arterial inflammation commonly experienced by diabetics, which can lead to cardiovascular disease
  - Prevent nerve inflammation and ease the pain of neuropathy - the most common complication of diabetes - by stimulating receptors in the body and brain.
  - Lower blood pressure over time, which can help reduce the risk of heart disease and other diabetes complications
  - Keep blood vessels open and improve circulation.
  - Relieve muscle cramps and the pain of gastrointestinal (GI) disorders
  - Be used to make topical creams to relieve neuropathic pain and tingling in hands and feet
- Cannabis compounds have also been shown to reduce intra-ocular pressure (the fluid pressure within the eye) considerably in people with glaucoma - a type of eye disease that is caused by conditions that severely restrict blood flow to the eye, such as severe diabetic retinopathy.

## **2015 research**

Israeli researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem believe cannabidiol (CBD), a compound found in cannabis, could treat different illnesses such as diabetes, atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

CBD is non-psychoactive and possesses anti-inflammatory properties. Chronic inflammation is known to play a role in the development of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.