

What do we know about the risks associated with cannabis-based products?

The potential side effects caused by any chemical, product or medicine must be carefully considered. It is essential to understand the risks posed by cannabis-based products before using them



Regulatory approved cannabis-based medicines

The risks of cannabis-based medicines are assessed in the **same way** as all medicines

Regulatory bodies have approved their use by doctors after a review of **high-quality evidence**^{1,2}

This evidence shows that their **benefits outweigh the risk of side effects**, which may include dizziness, dry mouth and tiredness^{2,3}

Regulatory bodies **continue to monitor** any side effects experienced by patients¹

Non-regulatory approved cannabis-based products

Little is known about the risks of 'medical cannabis' products⁴⁻⁷

Few clinical studies have been carried out involving their use, so high-quality evidence is **not available** about their potential side effects⁴⁻⁷

The contents of these products, and therefore the dose taken, can be **inconsistent**, making it difficult to test how they affect people's health⁸

CBD-containing consumer/food products

The risks posed by these products are **not well understood**⁹

There may be a **lack of evidence** supporting their quality, safety and how well they work⁹

They may sometimes contain **THC** despite this not being written on the packaging¹⁰

This, and other potential contaminants, may cause **unwanted side effects**¹⁰

Recreational cannabis

The content of recreational cannabis is not controlled and **varies considerably**¹¹

Recreational cannabis can cause **short-term** side effects including anxiety and memory impairment¹²

It may also cause **long-term** side effects on organs including the brain, heart and lungs¹²

What are cannabinoids?

Endocannabinoids

Made in the body and are important for both physical and mental health¹³

Phytocannabinoids

Chemicals that occur naturally in the cannabis plant¹⁴

Synthetic cannabinoids

Artificial chemicals that are manufactured¹⁵

These are found in many cannabis-based products and medicines^{4,10}

Learn more about cannabis-based products by visiting www.cannabinoideducation360.com

Learn more > about the role of government/regulatory bodies including the European Medicines Agency (EMA) by visiting our glossary at www.cannabinoideducation360.com

¹European Medicines Agency. European regulatory system for medicines: a consistent approach to medicines regulation across the European Union (EMA/716925/2016). 2016. Accessed January 2022; ²European Medicines Agency. From laboratory to patient: the journey of a medicine assessed by EMA (EMA/103813/2018). 2019. Accessed January 2022; ³Whiting et al. JAMA 2015;313(24):2456-73; ⁴European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Medical use of cannabis and cannabinoids: questions and answers for policymaking. 2018. Accessed January 2022; ⁵Martin et al. Trials 2020;21:1932; ⁶Pratt et al. Syst Rev 2019;3:320; ⁷Ladha et al. Molecules 2020;25:4042; ⁸Bettiol et al. Front Pharmacol 2019;9:1543; ⁹Chesney et al. Ther Adv Psychopharmacol 2020;10:1-13; ¹⁰Lachenmeier et al. F1000Res 2019;8:1394; ¹¹Freeman et al. Addiction 2019;114:1015-23; ¹²World Health Organization. The health and social effects of nonmedical cannabis use. 2016. Accessed January 2022; ¹³Hillard. Int Rev Neurobiol 2015;125:1-47; ¹⁴Morales et al. Prog Chem Org Nat Prod 2017;103:103-31; ¹⁵NHS UK. Cannabis-based products for medicinal use: frequently asked questions. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines-2/support-for-prescribers/cannabis-based-products-for-medical-use/cannabis-based-products-for-medical-use-frequently-asked-questions>. Accessed January 2022