

Too Scientific; Didn't Understand!

Let me explain!

Medicinal cannabis use for mental health: what do we know?

What?

We **searched the literature** for previous studies that looked at the effect of **medicinal cannabis use** on **mental health** and made a **summary** of what they found.



Why?

More and more people are using cannabis **medicinally with the intention to improve their mental health**. However, cannabis use can also cause significant **mental health problems**. Hence, we wanted to look at the **scientific evidence** for the effectiveness of medicinal cannabis use to improve a wide range of mental health problems and whether these effects are different for the use of different cannabinoids (e.g., THC, CBD or combinations).

How?

We screened **18.341 scientific articles** and identified **49 studies** conducted in **15 different countries** that compared the **medicinal use of cannabis** with a **placebo or a control group** not using cannabis. We summarized and integrated the results of these studies.

What did we find?

Cannabis - also when used for medicinal purposes - can have **positive effects**, **negative effects**, or **no effect at all** on mental health symptoms. In most studies, cannabis had **neither positive nor negative effects** on symptoms of **autism, ADHD, OCD, tic disorders, bipolar disorder, or PTSD**. Notably, high-quality studies with a control group studying the effects on **depression** are lacking.

Positive effects

Medicinal cannabis seems to provide **acute relief** in some cases of **anxiety** and **sleep-related problems**. The effects depend on the cannabinoid used: **CBD** or a **combination of CBD and THC** appears to be most effective.

In people with **addiction** (e.g., opioid addiction), cannabis might **relieve some withdrawal symptoms and craving** when trying to reduce or quit use. However, as cannabis itself is addictive, **caution** for use in these circumstances is needed.

Negative effects

Medicinal cannabis - especially the use of **THC** products - showed negative effects when used to relieve symptoms of **anorexia nervosa, psychosis, and schizophrenia**.

Caution when using medicinal cannabis

Cannabis is notoriously hard to dose correctly and can lead to acute negative experiences. This is related to the lack of (correct) labelling of the cannabinoids (e.g., CBD and THC) present in the cannabis we use.

Furthermore, cannabis is an addictive substance, and regular use increases the chance of developing an addiction. Supervision of a qualified health professional is always advised.

Important!

There are large **individual differences** in how people respond to cannabis. Taken together, our results show that the effects of cannabis on mental health **depend on** the **mental health concern** and the **type of cannabinoid** used. Medicinal cannabis can provide **acute relief**, but our results reveal **no evidence for long-term benefits** in most cases.

