

Medical Marijuana for Inflammatory Bowel Disease (Crohn's)



From 2 million in 1999, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated [three million American adults](#) diagnosed with IBD in 2015.

Worse, there is yet no approved cure for the condition.

For clarity, there are two common forms of IBD— Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis. This article focuses on Crohn's Disease.

Reading on, you'd discover how medical cannabis may help manage your inflammatory bowel disease concerns – notably, Crohn's Disease –as well as its potential side effects, safety, and legality.

Well, before we move in-depth...

What Is Crohn's Disease?

Crohn's disease is a chronic health condition characterized by an inflamed digestive tract. The disease may affect any part of the digestive system, but commonly the small intestine and colon.

While its causes aren't entirely clear, some experts link the condition to genetics, environmental and lifestyle factors, and immunity.

Crohn's disease comes with symptoms that vary based on severity and type.

What Are the Symptoms of Crohn's Disease?

Typical symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite and nausea

As a [relapsing-remitting disorder](#), patients may experience a sudden significant change in symptoms' severity.

As mentioned, Crohn's Disease has no known cure – Existing medications are but to alleviate symptoms and help balance patients' health.

Can I Use Conventional Prescriptions for IBD?

Of course.

Corticosteroids, aminosalicylates, and immunomodulatory medications are typical conventional treatment options. However, these pharmaceuticals are widely flawed. Too often, they leave users with symptoms, from mild cases like:

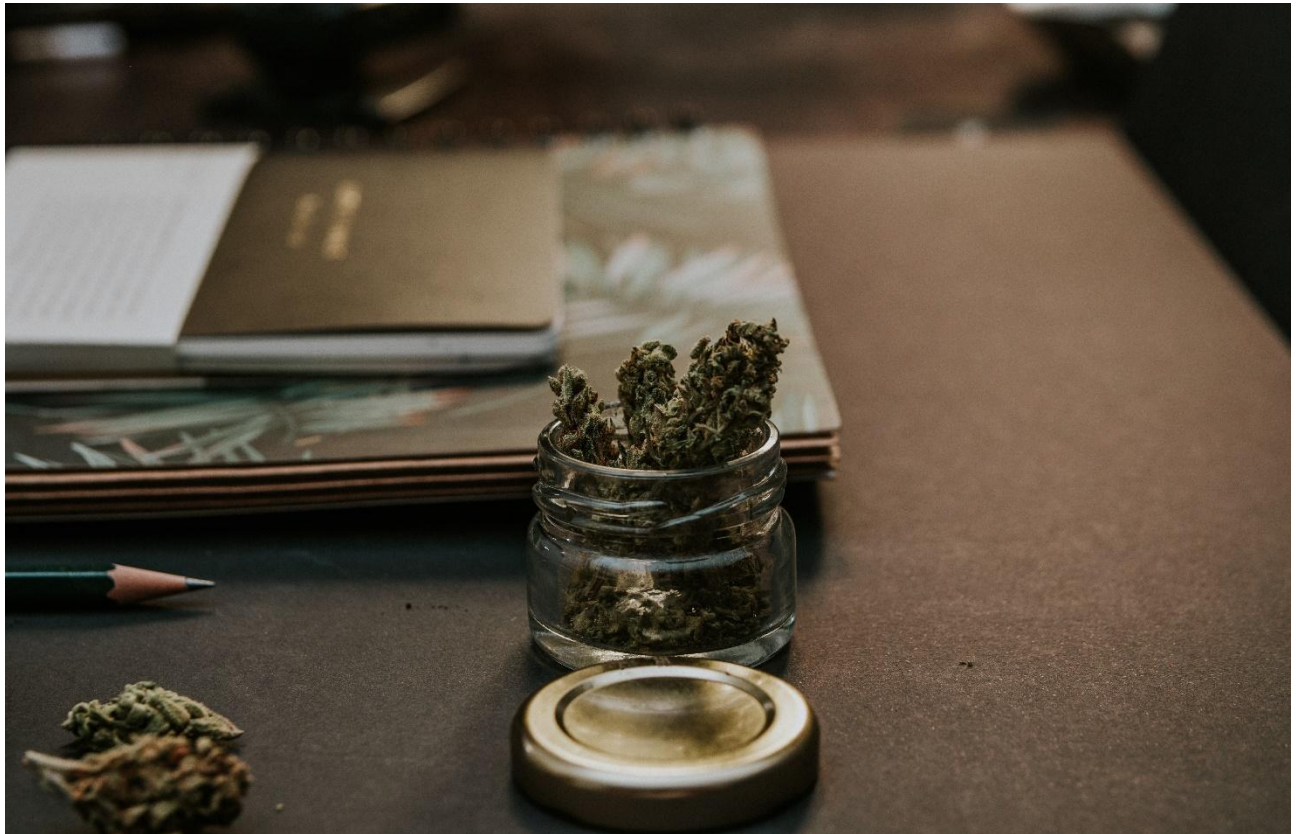
- Acne
- Vomiting
- Headache
- mood changes

to more threatening conditions such as:

- Liver problems
- Inflammation of the pancreas
- Myelosuppression (decrease bone marrow production)

The search for an effective, safe, and more-natural option has led experts to investigate medical marijuana for IBD.

What Is Medical Marijuana?



In simple terms, medical marijuana involves the use of marijuana (well, it's components) to treat certain health conditions. It's no news that the cannabis plant houses a truckload of [potential therapeutic benefits](#).

With these promising data from ongoing findings, the controversial cannabis plant may become a threat to the existence of conventional chemical-laden pharmaceutical drugs.

Research links cannabis' therapeutic potentials to its rich health-giving chemical profile. For clarity, cannabis contains over a hundred cannabinoids – naturally-occurring compounds – each showing different potency levels. Among these cannabinoids, two stand out:

- Cannabidiol(CBD) – known for its many therapeutic properties
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the famous compound responsible for the infamous '*high*' cannabis users experience.

ALL these compounds contribute to individual useful properties, which, collectively, make medical marijuana a thing.

Does Medical Cannabis Work for Crohn's Disease?

While research is still in its infancy, early results suggest cannabis's properties may help ease Crohn's symptoms. However, a [2018 publication that reviewed three studies](#) posits that evidence were but insufficient to back up claims of marijuana's effectiveness for Crohn's Diseases.

The first study sampled 21 Crohn's disease patients who smoked marijuana or placebo for eight weeks.

The marijuana users had higher chances of attaining clinical remission compared to the placebo group. However, the authors found the

marijuana group experienced more adverse effects, including nausea, sleepiness, confusion, and memory loss – although at mild levels.

Another study in the review compared the effect of marijuana oil and those who dosed placebo. The research recorded no changes in the level of clinical remission.

The last study sampled 50 Crohn's disease patients who dosed marijuana or placebo oil for up to 8 weeks. The finding showed marijuana produced better results, reducing symptoms, and increasing general quality of life.

However, the authors say evidence from the trial was too weak to make any conclusive claim. Hence, they called for more research to assess the effectiveness and safety of medical cannabis for Crohn's Disease.

How Does Medical Cannabis Work?

The effect of cannabis on Crohn's is a function of the Endocannabinoid System (ECS). The ECS is a network of receptors and internally-occurring cannabinoids – called endocannabinoids. ECS components (cannabinoids and receptors) interacts to influence pain, appetite, mood, emotions, memory, immunity, stress, gastrointestinal (GI) mortality.

When plant-occurring cannabinoids (called phytocannabinoids) are ingested, they mimic the endocannabinoids (internally-produced cannabinoids).

The cannabis-sourced cannabinoids bind to the same receptors and cause reactions that may increase or reduce neurotransmitters (certain molecules by which the brain cells communicate). The research observes that ECS's health affects IBD's pathology.

Is Cannabis Legal?

While marijuana remains illegal under federal laws, each state has unique cannabis-related rules.

More and more states have bowed to the pressure to legalize medicinal cannabis since California broke the record in 1996. Interestingly, [32 states](#) have followed suit, while four more states may join soon.

These jurisdictions have set aside effective and efficient medical marijuana schemes that help regulate producers' and users' activities. Such regulatory frameworks also allow those on prescription access to these products without any prosecution risk.

While the legislative details are on state-by-state bases, medical marijuana programs collectively promote cannabis sourced from less hitting strains.

Is Medical Cannabis Safe for Inflammatory Bowel Disease?

Even with its increasing [awareness and widespread acceptance](#), there are yet inadequate evidence to conclude cannabis's adverse effect.

Due to legal and medical restrictions, cannabis researches are relatively low. Indicators, however, suggest cannabis dosage may cause complication, including;

- Anxiety and paranoia
- Reduced IQ
- Addiction
- Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome
- And psychosis.

Medical experts have expressed divergent opinions on these effects.

However, the short term side effects which come with cannabis's intoxicating profile include:

- Lack of concentration
- Short term memory
- Paranoia
- Anxiety
- Reduced blood pressure

- Heart rate increase
- Impaired motor skills

For these, avoid using medical marijuana before operating machines, driving, or engaging in other activities that require reflex actions or quick thinking.

Again, being a widely unregulated niche, many labeled cannabis products contain an unhealthy concentration of harmful chemicals like lead particles, phencyclidine, etc. While there yet no notable long-term effects of cannabis, these impurities can mar your medical marijuana experience, leave dangerous side effects, and, in worse cases, become fatal.

Noteworthily, health experts have warned that medical marijuana may pose a greater health risk to expectant mothers since there is no substantial evidence of its safety for the fetus.

Also, people with a mental health history may worsen their health state with cannabis products.

Wrap Up

To date, there is [no scientifically certified cure for Crohn's Disease](#). Early reports from limited studies, however, show CBD may help handle

Crohn's disease symptoms. Research authors warn that existing evidence are but too shallow to make any definite conclusions.

Also, several other medications support IBD's treatment. Before you attempt medical marijuana for inflammatory Bowel Disorder (IBD), do well to discuss with your doctor.