



Can CBD Help You Sleep?

SOME RESEARCH
SUGGESTS CBD MAY BE
WORTH A TRY

CBD and Sleep part 1

- ▶ People have been turning to cannabis for its possible health benefits for a long, long time. Its ability to help people, for example, is mentioned in the Atharvaveda, a Hindu text that dates to around 1500 B.C., and its use for inducing sleep is described in a 1200 A.D. Chinese medical text.
- ▶ Today, people are still using cannabis to help them sleep, particularly one form of it: CBD, or cannabidiol. That's a compound found in hemp that doesn't get you high, and that has recently exploded in popularity because of its potential to treat other health problems, including pain and anxiety.
- ▶ In a recent nationally representative Consumer Reports survey, about 10 percent of Americans who reported trying CBD said they used it to help them sleep, and most of those people said it worked.

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- ▶ It's easy to understand why people are turning to CBD to help with sleep: Almost 80 percent of Americans say they have trouble sleeping at least once a week, according to another recent nationally representative CR survey of 1,267 U.S. adults. And many existing treatments, particularly prescription and over-the-counter drugs, are often not very effective—and are risky, too.
 - ▶ A small but growing body of scientific research provides some support for CBD as a sleep aid. A study out this month, for example, suggests CBD might help people with short-term sleep problems.
 - ▶ And Joseph Maroon, M.D., a clinical professor and neurosurgeon at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center who has researched the effect of cannabis on the brain, says that CBD has properties that could help some people sleep better. Most notably, he says, it appears to ease anxiety and pain, both of which can make it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep.

CBD and Sleep part 2

- ▶ Some other research hints that CBD may also affect sleep directly, by interacting with receptors in the brain that govern the body's daily sleep/wake cycles, according to a 2017 review of sleep and cannabis in the journal *Current Psychiatry Reports*.
- ▶ But “many questions still remain as to timing, the amount to take, and route of dosing CBD for sleep,” Maroon says. All of that could affect who CBD helps for sleep, and who it doesn't.
- ▶ And how it affects people does seem to be hit or miss. For example, Melissa Giovanni, age 32, a licensed dietitian in Nashville, Tenn., takes CBD regularly for sleep and says it often helps. But Liz Fuller, age 47, a makeup artist in Boston, says she tried two different CBD brands—spending about \$135—to treat her insomnia, and neither worked. This could be due to the dose taken.

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- ▶ Maroon says he doesn't see CBD as a treatment for insomnia, but instead as an “alternative natural method to help calm anxious thoughts that often delay or interrupt natural sleep.” He points out that next to nothing is known about the safety or effectiveness of CBD in children, pregnant women, or older people when used for sleep or anxiety. Maroon urges those with insomnia to see their doctor before using any treatment.
 - ▶ Still, he notes that if you occasionally have difficulty sleeping, CBD is considered a safe, non-habit-forming, natural alternative.
 - ▶ For those looking to try CBD to see whether it helps improve sleep, here's what you need to know.

How CBD Might Help With Sleep

- ▶ One way CBD may help with sleep is by easing anxiety. In a study in the January issue of *The Permanente Journal*, published by the Kaiser-Permanente health insurance company, Colorado researchers looked at the health records of 72 patients who were treated with CBD for either anxiety or poor sleep.
- ▶ During the three-month study, anxiety levels did decline, even in people whose main complaint was poor sleep. For those with sleep problems, the results weren't as clear cut, though people did report some improvement in the first month.
- ▶ Those benefits might be due to the placebo effect, says Scott Shannon, M.D., the study's main author and an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Colorado-Children's Hospital in Denver. But Shannon, who is also founder of the Wholeness Center, an integrative medicine clinic in Ft. Collins, Colo., also thinks that some people may have slept better because they "worried less about their sleep issue."



▶ Scientists have some biological explanations for how CBD may affect both sleep and anxiety. Recent studies have shown that cannabis compounds interact with receptors throughout the body—the so-called endocannabinoid system—including in the brain. At least one of those type of receptors is thought to affect the body's sleep/wake cycle, offering one explanation for how CBD could affect sleep directly. And CBD also interacts with another receptor in the brain that researchers have linked to anxiety.

▶ **Source:** <https://www.consumerreports.org/cbd/can-cbd-help-you-sleep/>