

Are all cannabis-based products the same?

Cannabis-based products are becoming more widely available and it is important to understand the differences between them. Things to consider include what they contain, how they are accessed, and what effects they may have on health

Regulatory approved cannabis-based medicines

Cannabis-based medicines are **no different** from other medicines. They are the same in the following ways:



Studies support their use to treat specific health conditions. Their **benefits outweigh their risks** in these cases¹⁻³



Based on current evidence, regulatory bodies have determined that they are **suitable for use as treatments**



Regulatory bodies continue to **monitor any side effects** experienced by patients after their approval²

Medicines are of a **high quality** because each batch is tested to ensure their contents are the same every time they are made²

Learn more

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



Learn more

about the risks associated with cannabis-based products by visiting www.cannabinoideducation360.com

Non-regulatory approved cannabis-based products

Often called **'medical cannabis'** products
In some countries, doctors can prescribe these to patients with **certain illnesses**¹



However, there is a **lack of high-quality evidence** for the effects they have on health⁴



As a result, regulatory bodies have **not provided approval** for their use as a medicine¹

CBD-containing consumer/food products



These products can be bought in shops and online without a prescription⁵



Claims about how these products might affect people's health should not be made as they are **not medicines**^{7,8}



Include oils, sprays, creams, vape juice, supplements and gummies⁶

Recreational cannabis



Recreational cannabis is often used to achieve the 'high' feeling that results from consuming the **large amounts of THC** that it contains^{9,10}

It is sometimes used by people in an attempt to **self-medicate**, without guidance from a doctor¹¹

Use of cannabis for recreational purposes is **illegal** in most European countries because of concerns about its health effects¹²



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 plant¹⁰



The best understood phytocannabinoids are **delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)** and **cannabidiol (CBD)** but there are also others such as cannabiol (CBN) and cannabigerol (CBG)¹⁰



Synthetic cannabinoids
Artificial chemicals that are manufactured¹⁴

These are found in many cannabis-based products and medicines^{1,7,9}

¹European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Medical use of cannabis and cannabinoids: questions and answers for policymaking. 2018; ²European Medicines Agency. The European regulatory system for medicines: a consistent approach to medicines regulation across the European Union (EMA/716925/2016); ³European Medicines Agency. From laboratory to patient: the journey of a medicine assessed by EMA. 2019. Available at: https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/other/laboratory-patient-journey-centrally-authorized-medicine_en.pdf. Accessed November 2021; ⁴Martin et al. *Trials* 2020;21:932; ⁵Liebling et al. *Cannabis Cannabinoid Res* 2020;doi:10.1089/can.2019.0078; ⁶Small, Marcus. In: Trends in new crops and new uses. Editors Janick J, Whipkey A. ASHS Press, Alexandria, VA, USA. 2002; ⁷European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Low-THC cannabis products in Europe. December 2020. Accessed November 2021; ⁸Home Office. Cannabis, CBD and other cannabinoids: drug licensing factsheet. June 2020. Accessed November 2021; ⁹Chandra et al. *Eur Arch Psychiatr Clin Neurosci* 2019;269:5-15; ¹⁰Morales et al. *Prog Chem Org Nat Prod* 2017;103:103-31; ¹¹Cannabis Law Report. The full report: left behind: the scale of illegal cannabis use for medicinal intent in the UK. <https://cannabislaw.report/the-full-report-left-behind-the-scale-of-illegal-cannabis-use-for-medicinal-intent-in-the-uk/>. Accessed November 2021; ¹²European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Cannabis legislation in Europe: an overview. 2017. Available at: https://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/c0703c01-0d38-11e7-8a35-01aa75ed71a1.0001.03/DOC_1. Accessed November 2021; ¹³Hillard. *Int Rev Neurobiol* 2015;125:1; ¹⁴NHS UK. Cannabis-based products for medicinal use: frequently asked questions. Accessed November 2021



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