

ABCs of CBD

It's gained a significant fan base in the past few years thanks to its 'wide-ranging health benefits', but is there any substance to the hype around this cure-all elixir?

By **LAUREN ENDRODY**



In the 1940s, CBD was identified and distinguished as an individual chemical property of cannabis, with the initial studies on its effectiveness in treating epilepsy to follow only a few decades later. However, it has been getting a lot of attention recently and is used more openly for its medicinal value, thanks to a growing change in governmental and societal attitudes. In fact, unless you've been living under a rock, you will have noticed that it's being talked about especially frequently nowadays. CBD has been popping up in products, food and drinks almost everywhere – from coffee and beer to dog treats and pizza – even ice cream, bath bombs, beauty products and massage oils.

CBD Defined

CBD refers to 'cannabidiol', the second most predominant chemical component of cannabis, after tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Although CBD is derived from the marijuana plant, it is considered less controversial when it comes to commercial use because it is not the component of marijuana that causes psychoactive effects or, in other words, gets you 'high' – THC is responsible for that. In fact, CBD is extracted from the hemp plant, which is a specific strain of the cannabis plant species and, as a recent report on CBD by the World Health Organisation (WHO) states, 'hemp cultivars produce substantially less THC and higher levels of CBD.'

Safety First

CBD oil has been found to offer a vast array of positive health effects, with minor side-effects and zero risk of it leading to addiction or abuse. 'CBD exhibits no effects indicative of any abuse or dependence potential. It is generally well-tolerated with a good safety profile. There is no evidence of recreational use of CBD or any public health-related problems associated with the use of pure CBD,' says the WHO. So since it doesn't alter your mind or mood, it is used purely for health and medicinal purposes.

Bring On The Benefits

According to the WHO, there is no government-authorised pure medicinal CBD product – except for Epidiolex, which has completed the final phase of clinical trials and is currently under review for approval in the US. It came about due to the extensive clinical research around CBD's health benefits on patients with epilepsy, and specifically the more severe forms (Lennox-Gastaut- and Dravet syndrome) that don't react to anti-seizure medication. The results of Epidiolex, and CBD in general, on the treatment of epilepsy have been remarkable. In most cases, the frequency of seizures decreased significantly, while in some, seizures stopped altogether. CBD has also been shown to help people with anxiety,



UNTIL MAY 2020, CBD CAN BE BOUGHT AND SOLD – ON TWO CONDITIONS: THE MAXIMUM DAILY DOSE MAY NOT EXCEED 20 MG, AND IT CAN ONLY ADVERTISE GENERAL HEALTH ENHANCEMENT OR HEALTH MAINTENANCE

PTSD, insomnia, cancer-related symptoms, chronic pain from multiple sclerosis or arthritis, dermatological issues such as acne, neurological disorders such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, and improving heart health.

Further potential benefits that still require more research include reported antipsychotic effects, assistance with substance abuse treatment, and usefulness in preventing diabetes.

But, Are There Any Side Effects?

Reported side effects of CBD use include nausea, fatigue, and diarrhoea, as well as changes in appetite. So far, there's not much more concrete evidence of any serious safety risks in consuming CBD oil, however, it has not been approved by the Food and Drug Association (FDA) in the US as yet, due to it only recently being properly reviewed. On Epidiolex, the FDA reported: 'During its review of the marketing application for Epidiolex, the FDA identified certain safety risks, including the potential for liver injury.' We're still in the beginning phases of investigating any reported negative health outcomes related to CBD, though, so it's still too early to say whether it's entirely safe or not. **FL**

THE LAW

IN THE UNITED STATES

- The 2018 Farm Bill made hemp and any products derived from it legal under federal law (as long as they have a THC concentration of no more than 0.3%). This means that CBD oil extracted from the hemp plant is legal to purchase.
- However, selling CBD oil as a dietary supplement or unapproved health product is illegal. 'Any product intended to have a medical or therapeutic use, and any product (other than a food) intended to affect the structure or function of the body of humans or animals, is a drug. Drugs must generally receive pre-market approval by FDA. An unapproved new drug cannot be distributed or sold,' the FDA says. In other words, the selling of CBD has been prohibited unless a retailer does not put it in food, add it to dietary supplements or make any health claims about it.

IN SOUTH AFRICA

- As of May 2019, the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, updated the classification of CBD in the Medicines and Related Substances Act of 1965 from a Schedule 7 to Schedule 4 drug. This means that CBD is attainable through prescription by a doctor or medical professional.
- In another unexpected development, the Minister exempted CBD from any regulation for a period of 12 months to allow for deliberation.
- So, until May 2020, CBD can be bought and sold by anyone - on two conditions: the maximum daily dose of CBD may not exceed 20 mg, and it can only advertise general health enhancement or health maintenance, or promise relief of minor symptoms, as long as those symptoms are not linked to a disease or disorder. Anything deviating from this would be considered illegal and guilty parties could face prosecution.
- With the recent inundation of CBD-oil products on the market, and the newly revised law allowing anyone to buy and sell them, it's easy for people to take advantage of this. Before you go and grab a cup of CBD coffee or pick up some CBD oil from your nearest corner store, make sure the retailer is aware of the laws and that they are meticulous regarding the contents of what they are selling you. This is important, not only to ensure you are not breaking the law, but also to avoid consuming anything impure or ultimately detrimental to your health.