



By Anna Laird Barto

CBD-INFUSED YOGA:

A New Trend Rooted in Ancient Tradition

Today's yogis have choices: traditional styles like Ashtanga, Bikram and Iyengar have competition with edgier offerings like Goat yoga, AcroYoga, Standup Paddleboard yoga and now the latest wellness craze, CBD-infused Yoga.

What makes CBD-infused yoga stand out from other yoga trends is the atypical combination of yoga and cannabis, the plant that produces CBD and one whose benefits and use traces back to ancient India. But cannabis in yoga has ancient beginnings, and is even mentioned in the Vedas, a collection of Sanskrit texts dating from 3,000 B.C. According to these texts, cannabis has the power to release the human mind from anxiety: the god Shiva is often shown imbibing cannabis in the form of tea.

CBD, short for cannabidiol, is a chemical compound found in the resin of the cannabis flower. Most of the CBD products you're likely to encounter in today's yoga classes are derived from hemp, the most legally available form of cannabis. Hemp belongs to the same species of cannabis as marijuana but has one major difference: hemp will not make you high. This is because it contains less than .03% THC, the chemical responsible for the intoxicating effects of marijuana.

While science has come to recognize the health benefits of yoga, research into CBD has not been able to keep pace with the media hype. However, the early data on CBD is promising, especially as a treatment for anxiety, epilepsy, and pain.

THERE ARE BENEFITS OF COMBINING YOGA AND CBD

Like yoga, CBD can help promote harmony of the body and mind, and it acts on the body's endocannabinoid system (ECS). While the exact mechanisms of the ECS are still not well understood, we do know that its main function is to maintain the body's homeostasis in the face of changing environmental conditions.

“Yoga is an excellent way to up-regulate and tone our endocannabinoid systems,” said Caitlin Bernhard, Cannabis Nurse Practitioner at the CED clinic in Northampton, Massachusetts. “Therefore, regular yoga practice plus regular CBD use is an excellent way to bring balance to our bodies.”

Bernhard stressed that CBD is most effective when taken as a daily supplement. “It’s not something that you can just use sporadically and expect much results,” she said. Her clients typically notice a difference within 2-6 weeks. As for topical CBD products, like creams and salves, Bernhard said they need at least 20 minutes to take effect. This means they are best applied at

the very beginning or end of class (to support recovery), not immediately before attempting a challenging posture.

CBD products are so new to the marketplace that there are few safeguards in place to ensure quality and truth in advertising. To stay safe and achieve the best results, Bernhard recommends sticking to organic, broad spectrum, CBD products, preferably from small local growers. The term full spectrum, or “whole plant,” CBD refers to products containing all naturally occurring compounds in cannabis. This includes terpenes, flavanoids and trace amounts of THC (nowhere near enough to get you high). Together, these compounds are said to amplify the therapeutic effect.



A DEEPENING BODY AWARENESS

“When it comes to cannabis, it really is a subjective experience,” said yoga teacher and entrepreneur Stacey Mulvey, whose company, Marijuasana, offers both CBD and marijuana-infused classes in the US and Canada. One effect you may notice is a deepening body awareness.

“When you’re going through a movement modality like yoga where you’re really immersed in your body, it will start to affect the way you’re able to sense and feel things as you’re moving,” said Mul-

vey. According to her, CBD is another way to facilitate the kind of “Aha!” moment students can experience on the mat.

“We as human beings get into these really tight patterns that we end up going to a yoga class to fix,” she said. “It’s really helpful to add something that helps you break through those barriers or enables you to feel it or conceptualize (yoga) a little bit differently.”



IT'S NOT ALL THAT DIFFERENT

According to Mulvey, you’re not going to find your yoga experience significantly different other than the cost. CBD-infused classes typically run \$10-\$20 higher than regular yoga classes.

Her particular classes begin with an invitation to visit the communal “tea bar” where students mingle and sip CBD-infused tea. Other teachers use CBD-infused chocolate, tinctures, salves, or patches. After students ingest CBD, Mulvey leads them through a gradually more intense sequence of poses, followed by a break and the opportunity to refuel at the Tea Bar.

At the Local Yoga Joint in Turners Falls, Massachusetts, CBD samples are also combined with restorative poses, like supported backbends and child’s pose, which help lull

body and mind into a deep state of relaxation. During Shavasana, the final resting pose, teacher Amanda Reynolds applies CBD oil to students’ foreheads.

Why should you attend a CBD-infused yoga class instead of just ingesting your favorite CBD product before arriving at the studio? The only real difference, said Mulvey, is acceptance. Not all yoga spaces welcome cannabis. Even non-intoxicating CBD is sometimes looked down upon as a shortcut to the elevated flow states yogis often practice so hard to attain. What critics may not realize, Mulvey said, is that with or without cannabis, the “body high” we experience during yoga and meditation is actually positive feedback from our endocannabinoid system.

WHERE TO EXPERIENCE CBD YOGA

Most CBD-infused yoga classes are offered as pop-up events or workshops, such as those put on by Mulvey’s company, Marijuasana and Colorado-based Ganjasana. Only a few studios and fitness centers currently include CBD-infused yoga in their regular menu of classes, but that number is definitely poised to grow.

THE LOCAL YOGA JOINT
Turners Falls, Massachusetts

LOTUS JO’S
Grand Rapids, Michigan

URBAN SANCTUARY
Denver, Colorado

GRASSROOTS HEALING
Lanham, Maryland

MANDALA YOGA
Amagansett, New York

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