

Diana Rangaves

Generalized anxiety and the treatment of this disorder is one of the most challenging conditions facing modern medicine. With an estimated 40 million people suffering from anxiety and anxiety related disorders, it is no wonder that alternative solutions are on the rise.

Research about the effects of cannabis use and its mitigating effects on anxiety are still slim. Advocates argue that it is the most holistic approach to anxiety treatment, while the scientific community rallies that it is not a viable long-term solution.

Scientific Community Says No

One of the most challenging aspects of mental related conditions is the requirement of the person suffering to self-report. This means that it is difficult for a practitioner to ascertain the level of anxiety and the challenges experienced by the person. Because of this, many treat anxieties the same way for each person. Current research from Washington State University has shown that in people who have self-reported anxiety, cannabis use significantly lowers anxiety and stress. However, the study reached no conclusion about the long-term benefits of cannabis use.

Some research indicates that long-term use can increase the potential for memory loss because the THC found in cannabis alters the hippocampus, the area in the brain responsible for memory creation.

Gen Pop Says Yes

The use of cannabis to self-treat anxiety is widespread. It is the second most common reason that users seek out cannabis because so many people sincerely believe in its benefits. There are plenty of urban legends about inexperienced cannabis users taking too much and becoming disturbingly confused about reality.

As with all holistic medicine, it is probably wise to absorb those stories skeptically. Because each person responds to cannabis differently, the most effective way to determine its benefit is to try out small amounts and move from there. THC and CBD both interact with systems in the brain that influence anxiety. When a person uses the right strain and the correct amount, it is possible that the symptoms are reduced and muted.

The Bottom Line

There is very little research on the effects of using cannabis to treat anxiety. There are also so many unknowns when using cannabis as a treatment option. These include the strain, dosing, and the user. With the right research, it is possible that science and the general population will be able to come to an agreement, but that might not happen any time soon.