

Is Pharmaceutical-Grade CBD Safer than Retail?

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Should you be buying your CBD products at a pharmacy? Consumers are concerned about the safety of their CBD products due to the lack of research and testing conducted by relevant authorities.



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Last Updated: Oct 12, 2020



If you're one of those consumers who worry about CBD's safety, there's a lot to know more about it. At Leafreport, we talked to a licensed pharmacist to get his professional thoughts on the topic.

CBD Testing and FDA-Approved Usage

Though using CBD products might lift the mood and help with general wellness, they still require FDA approvals for claiming specific health benefits. The FDA approves a product for sale only if assessed in various clinical trials to confirm all possible uses and side effects.

As far as CBD's approval goes, the FDA has only [approved the drug's use to treat epilepsy in children](#). CBD has not been tested or approved for treatment or cure of any other disease

due to various barriers preventing this research. Therefore, sellers and pharmacies that claim to be providing an approved, legal CBD treatment for anything other than epilepsy are unauthentic and unreliable.

CBD has also been particularly disapproved for use in foods and dietary supplements. The FDA has not allowed the sale of CBD in this regard. Therefore, whichever food and dietary products include CBD are illegal and unsafe for use.

The research on the use of CBD among children and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding is still unavailable. The repercussion of any CBD-based product among this group of consumers is extremely dangerous.

Lack of Regulation on Sale of CBD Products

Other than the lag in CBD testing for additional indications, pharmaceutical organizations are also far behind in conducting adequate research before selling CBD products.

Recently, the FDA has started taking this matter more seriously. The organization has initiated several tests and trials.

Most of the illegal CBD products marketed as safe treatments for diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's, etc. include dangerous ingredients. Snake oil, heavy metals, and pesticides are just some of the harmful ingredients found in some of these unapproved CBD products available in the market.

One thing that needs to be clarified in the consumer market is that CBD is quite harmful in food use. So, any food item with CBD in it is a danger to your health. These unapproved CBD products can lead to serious risks such as liver damage, drowsiness, diarrhea, and mood swings. On top of that, it can react with other drugs that you're consuming.

Since there is a lack of research, it is unknown whether CBD is safe to consume alongside other drugs. The CBD tests conducted on animals so far have also shown an adverse effect of CBD on sexual performance among males. It hinders the development of sperms and decreases testosterone levels as well.

Different CBD Sourcing

You may be wondering how CBD got to the market if it isn't approved or 100% safe. At first, CBD was classified as a Schedule I controlled substance that couldn't even be researched and evaluated by ordinary organizations. Later, CBD extracted from marijuana versus CBD extracted from industrial hemp was differentiated. The latter got approval for possession and sale while the former remained a Schedule I controlled substance.

According to Dr. Chris Adlakha, PharmD, Founder of Grand Avenue Pharmacy, “Pharmacies will typically source already-made CBD products through their wholesalers. For example, we have Amerisource Bergen as our primary wholesaler. However, they may choose to purchase directly from a CBD manufacturer that approaches them.”

His pharmacy compounds and creates custom CBD formulations by collaborating with doctors. He indicates that, currently, “pharmacists typically do not have much, if any, education on CBD so it is imperative that they be educated – either on their own or through the seller of the product. I do not believe that pharmacies have access to CBD products that are not generally available to the public.”

The medical community must “build on the lack of education/knowledge on CBD, as most pharmacies/pharmacists will not attempt to make their own as we do. The amount of time and proper lab equipment needed is extensive.”

This is one major difference between the CBD products you’ll find in different pharmacies. The limitation here is regarding the percentage of THC in the products. Hemp and legal CBD is regarded as anything with less than 0.3% THC. Therefore, pharmacies have found a way around it by selling CBD products that are free of THC.

Regardless, the lack of research keeps the risk high. No matter how nicely companies market a CBD product, you never know how it may react with other drugs and how it may affect your body in the longer run.

How Can You Find Reliable CBD Products?

We recommend you read the following articles:

- [How to Avoid Getting Ripped Off When Buying CBD Products](#)
- [Picking the Right CBD Consumption Method for You](#)
- [What is a CBD Certificate of Analysis \(COA\) and Why is it Important to You?](#)

The question now is how you can find a CBD product to avail of its benefits without risking your health. The answer is to always go for pharmaceutical-grade products. These products guarantee 99% pure ingredients free of fillers, contaminants, and other unknown or harmful substances

Do not believe in all the implications that a CBD product promises. As you’ve read above, FDA does not approve CBD usage in food. It is also not approved for use as a treatment for any disease other than epilepsy. It would be best if you only went for CBD products that have authentic claims.

Dr. Adlakha knows there is a method as to how consumers source higher-quality CBD products. It is “education on labs is important. Comparing labs from differing brands can give a consumer an idea of the quality and cannabinoid content of the products in question.”

He advises requesting lab comparisons of the products and judge the various cannabinoid contents of each. Look for a product that is superior in every major category. The examples he cites are, “other things to look for as a consumer:

- Products should have a QR code (link to lab results), batch number, lot number and expiration date – it would be highly suspect if a product does not have this information available
- Extraction process – CO₂ is the best available and much better and cleaner than Ethanol extraction
- Building on the extraction above – cGMP certified manufacturers ONLY use CO₂ extraction. This process is expensive and time-intensive, so not all manufacturers use this process.

However, this yields the highest quality in the market and has stringent quality assurance controls in place to ensure consistency in the output.”

The responsibility of what you use, its effects, and its disadvantages fall upon you, the consumer. While the FDA works to find out clear answers, it is on you to ensure that you’re not being pulled into CBD scams. The best way is to double-check the manufacturer’s reputation, ask questions, do your research, and only after you’ve been satisfied, purchase and use a CBD product.

References:



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Dr. Diana Rangaves is Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm D). She graduated from the University of California, San Francisco and specializes in pharmacotherapy management. Diana has a broad range of acute clinical background and ambulatory care. She was an academic college professor; teaching critical thinking, ethics, pharmacology, addiction, behavior patterns, pharmacy, and nursing. As a Clinical Pharmacist, she is focused on chronic or disease state management.

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