

Cannabidiol (CBD)

What is CBD?

The marijuana plant is part of the hemp (cannabis) family and comes in many forms. The plant has many active parts called phytocannabinoids. There is a growing interest in two types to treat illness – Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD).

THC is the part of the plant that causes the “high” feeling. CBD does not cause the “high” feeling.

The other active parts are not as well understood but are believed to work with CBD to help treat illness. While CBD is advertised to help decrease pain, inflammation, and anxiety, this has not been shown in clinical trials.

Is CBD legal?

Hemp-based products made with less than 0.3% THC are legal based on the Farm Bill of 2018. Yet, the federal government and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) consider marijuana an illegal drug. This means that marijuana is not accepted for medical use in the US. Safety risks are also unclear and there is a high chance for abuse.

What is Epidiolex®?

Epidiolex is an FDA-approved prescription CBD. It is approved for rare seizure disorders. Epidiolex® has a different strength than the products you can buy online or in-stores. It is approved by the FDA, and is:

- grown and made pure from hemp plants,
- tested in clinical trials for safety and efficacy, and
- made in sterile and controlled settings.

What are the risks of CBD?

Common side effects include:

- changes in behavior
- anxiety
- appetite changes
- sleepiness
- feeling dizzy
- nausea/throwing up
- diarrhea

Do not drive or use heavy machines if you use CBD. CBD may affect the way other medicines work. Do not start or stop other medicines until you talk to your doctor. Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take. This includes:

- prescription
- over-the-counter
- vitamins
- herbal supplements
- cannabis-based products

Because herbal products and supplements, such as CBD, are not controlled by the FDA, there may be other ingredients in the product that are not on the label. If the plant is not grown in a well-controlled setting, the cannabis plant can absorb waste products such as metals, arsenic, nitrates, fungi, bacteria and pesticides. This could lead to other health problems.

A 2017 study found about 1 out of every 3 (31%) CBD products bought online had the same amount of CBD as noted on the label. The other 69% of the products had either too much or too little CBD when compared to the label.

What are UW Health's rules?

Hemp-based CBD products with less than or equal to 0.3% THC are allowed at UW Hospital. The product must be verified by a pharmacist to confirm that it meets our standards. Any CBD product that can't be confirmed cannot be used while in the hospital. We strive to provide only safe medicines to patients.

If you plan to use CBD oil during your stay, you must bring your own product and tell your doctor so an order can be entered.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8080.