

Cannabis & CBD

A guide for pet owners
from Nationwide® pet insurance



First, let's define some of the terms we'll be discussing:

- **THC:** The primary psychoactive cannabinoid (i.e., responsible for inducing a “high”).
- **CBD:** A non-psychoactive cannabinoid with potential therapeutic qualities. Research is ongoing to examine CBD's value in pet care.
- **Cannabinoids:** Chemical compounds in the cannabis plant, including THC and CBD.
- **Cannabis:** Both plant and plant products derived from the Cannabis sativa and Cannabis indica plants.
- **Hemp:** A cultivar of cannabis plants and grown mainly for fiber, seeds, oil, biofuel and CBD production. In the U.S., industrial hemp cannot legally have more than 0.3% THC on a dry weight basis.
- **Marijuana:** An informal name for cannabis more commonly used when referring to recreational use, similar to slang terms such as “pot” or “weed.” Marijuana typically refers to cannabis with a higher concentration of THC.

Did you know? The terms “medical marijuana” or “medical cannabis” can be used to describe any cannabis formulation used for medicinal purposes, whether or not it contains large amounts of THC.

What is THC?

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the psychoactive chemical in cannabis that creates a euphoric feeling. This chemical is taken into the body by smoking, vaping, or eating THC-laced edible products like baked goods, candies, tinctures and more.

Also, edibles may contain other foods that are toxic to pets, including chocolate, xylitol, raisins or macadamia nuts.

How are pets exposed to THC containing products?

Most pets accidentally ingest THC by eating edible cannabis products, though some are exposed by secondhand smoke. About 66% of cannabis-related calls to Pet Poison Helpline result from pets ingesting brownies, cookies or gummies.

What signs develop when a dog ingests THC?

- Lethargy
- Disorientation or agitation
- Increased sensitivity to motion or sound
- Dilated pupils
- Urinary incontinence
- Slowed heart rate
- Low blood pressure

Rarely, more severe signs such as hypothermia, rapid heart rate, shock and coma can occur.

Depending on the amount of THC ingested, some pets can remain symptomatic for several days. With appropriate medical care, most pets will make a full recovery. Thankfully, death is very rare.

What should I do if my pet is exposed to THC?

Contact Pet Poison Helpline or your veterinarian immediately. That way, you can determine if your pet received a toxic dose, and if veterinary care is needed.

What is CBD?

Cannabidiol (CBD) is a chemical compound found in cannabis that is used to treat certain seizure disorders in humans. Research suggests it may have value for treating other ailments such as anxiety and pain in both pets and people. This is an active field of study.

CBD has no psychoactive properties—meaning it doesn't produce a “high” like THC—and is being investigated for therapeutic benefits in pets.

Can CBD be valuable for pet care?

Studies are underway to determine the safety, dosing and therapeutic benefit of CBD in cats and dogs. Two primary areas of interest for veterinary care include treatment for pain and seizures.

Does CBD make pets “high” when ingested?

Short answer, no. However, some pets who have accidentally ingested CBD products do develop symptoms similar to those seen when THC is ingested (though the symptoms are usually weaker). When this occurs, poor quality product and/or contamination of CBD products with THC is likely to blame.

Are there adverse effects when pets take CBD therapeutically?

CBD is not an FDA-approved product for pets, so it has not been adequately studied for safety. The effects of chronic CBD dosing on cats and dogs are unknown, though early research found adverse effects including diarrhea, vomiting and elevated liver enzymes are possible.

As a precaution, it may not be advisable to give CBD to pets with existing liver damage. Your veterinarian may also want to closely monitor liver enzymes in pets taking CBD regularly.



Are over-the-counter products containing CBD FDA-approved?

No, OTC products containing CBD are not FDA-approved for pets or people, nor are they regulated by FDA.

As a result, many CBD products don't contain the amount of CBD stated on the label—if any at all—while others contain THC or synthetic cannabinoids, both of which can have adverse effects on pets and people. Until there's better regulatory oversight on CBD products, it's a “buyer beware” situation.

Can CBD be given with other supplements or medications?

Given the potential for adverse side effects when combined with other meds, you should always consult with a veterinarian before giving CBD products to your pet.

Pet Poison Helpline

If you think your pet has been exposed to something harmful, please call your veterinarian or Pet Poison Helpline immediately.

Pet Poison Helpline
855-289-0358
Available 24/7

Please be advised that a one-time, per-incident consultation fee applies.

In an emergency

Assess the situation so you can communicate clearly with your veterinarian. Most importantly, don't administer at-home treatment without first seeking veterinary advice.

Get help

If your pet is unconscious, convulsing or having difficulty breathing, go immediately to the nearest emergency veterinary hospital. While they are stabilizing your pet, call Pet Poison Helpline at 855-289-0358 for treatment recommendations.

We're here to help

Nationwide® offers pet insurance coverage for accidents, illnesses and preventive care.
Get a fast, no-obligation quote today.

This educational pamphlet is provided by Nationwide in coordination with Pet Poison Helpline, an animal poison control center based out of Minneapolis, Minn. Driven by our shared passion for pets, our common goal is to provide pet lovers with valuable information on pet health and safety.

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