



Cannabidoil (CBD) Medication Interactions

Cannabidiol (CBD) is a safe, non-intoxicating, and non-addictive cannabis compound with significant therapeutic attributes, but CBD-drug interactions may occur in some cases.

CBD and other plant cannabinoids can potentially interact with some pharmaceuticals by inhibiting the activity of cytochrome P450, a family of liver enzymes. This key enzyme group metabolizes most of the drugs we consume, including more than 60 percent of marketed meds.

While CBD is safe to use, it can potentially mess with other medications you may be taking. This quick guide should be all you need to safely use CBD even if you have other medications you need to take.



The grapefruit test is all you need

CBD interacts with other medications in your body the same way as grapefruit. If you've been told not to take your medication with grapefruit, this is due to the compounds in grapefruit that can interfere with the metabolism of many medications. The compounds in CBD do the same thing.

If you're still not sure if CBD will interact with your medication, do the grapefruit test with your doctor or pharmacist. Ask them: "Should I avoid eating grapefruits or drinking grapefruit juice with this medication?"

They will know exactly what you are talking about. If they say, "Yes, you should avoid grapefruits with your medication," you now know you need to be careful about mixing CBD with these same meds as well. This is when we suggest you have an open conversation with your doctor about the benefits of CBD.



How is CBD metabolized?

As well as understanding how general metabolism works, it's important to understand how CBD is metabolized – especially how it interacts with other substances for therapeutic reasons. As CBD moves through metabolic processes, it is converted into chemical compounds 7-OH-CBD and 6-OH-CBD in the liver.

At this time, not much is known about these two metabolites. Further research is needed. There has been some promise already however, in regard to metabolite D2(E) valproate, which has anticonvulsant effects. This is what it might play a role in the antiepileptic nature of CBD.

When understanding how CBD is metabolized, it is also important to keep in mind that THC/CBD ratios also known as strain profiles (with variable cannabinoid and terpene profiles) can influence the supplement's effects.

CBD and the cytochrome P-450 enzyme system

Research has clearly shown that cannabidiol, or CBD, has the potential to effectively treat many different ailments by manipulating the endocannabinoid system with very few unintended effects. However, some of cannabidiol's side effects can be dangerous if they are not properly understood. One such effect is the inhibition of the cytochrome P-450 enzyme system.

What is the cytochrome P-450 system?

The cytochrome P-450 enzyme system is located within the liver and is responsible for metabolizing 90 percent of the drugs you consume.

Why does it matter?

In order to determine appropriate dosages of medications, doctors make calculations using the average amount of time it takes for various drugs to be processed by through the P-450 system. If only one drug is processed, and the system is generally healthy, these averages are usually correct. However, certain drugs have the ability to affect processing times within the cytochrome P-450 system, thus making another drug metabolize faster or slower than they would have on their own. Similarly, if the system is unhealthy because of liver problems or pre-existing conditions, drugs may not metabolize as they should.

Cannabidiol in the cytochrome P-450 system

Cannabidiol can inhibit the cytochrome P-450 system's ability to metabolize certain drugs, which leads to an overall increase in processing times. This leads to higher levels of the drug in your system at one time and can cause unwanted side effects and/or overdose. Thus, if you are taking a drug affected by cannabidiol, you may need a dosage adjustment in order to take both drugs safely.

One kind of drug you should pay special attention to is a blood thinner like warfarin. Combining it with CBD can make the warfarin stay in your system for too long without being broken down.

CBD drug interactions aren't always bad. They can actually be a good thing. CBD can make other drugs more effective, so much so that you can reduce the dosage of those other drugs and thus have less negative side effects to deal with.



Drugs that interact with cannabidiol

Any drug metabolized by cytochrome P-450 enzymes could potentially interact with cannabidiol. According to the Indiana University Department of Medicine, drugs known to use the cytochrome P-450 system include:

- Steroids
- HMG CoA reductase inhibitors
- Calcium channel blockers
- Antihistamines
- Prokinetics
- HIV antivirals
- Immune modulators
- Benzodiazepines
- Anti-arrhythmic
- Antibiotics
- Anesthetics
- Anti-psychotics
- Anti-depressants
- Anti-epileptics
- Beta blockers
- PPIs
- NSAIDS
- Angiotensin II blockers
- Oral hypoglycemic agents
- Sulfonylureas

Keep in mind that this list does not necessarily contain every medication that could be affected by cannabidiol. Likewise, not every medication in each of the categories listed will cause an interaction. For this reason, you should consult a medical professional before taking any combination of drugs at the same time, as alternative medications or dosage adjustments may be required. If you are worried that your P-450 enzyme system may not be functioning properly, physicians can test the system to ensure that the medication(s) you take are metabolizing as expected.

CBD and its impact on high blood pressure

One in three adults in the U.S. has high blood pressure, a condition known as hypertension. Left unmanaged, it can lead to cardiovascular disease, which is characterized by an increased risk of stroke, heart attack, and even heart failure. A number of factors, including poor diet, stress, physical inactivity, alcohol, and tobacco use increase the risk of developing hypertension.

Some of the effects of cannabis on blood pressure, particularly the acute effects, are well understood and documented. However, research studies describing other effects, especially long-term adverse or positive effects, are limited, and often plagued by poor study design or the fact that findings from animal studies don't always neatly transfer to human subjects.

Further, many research findings are highly generalized, focusing on THC while neglecting consideration of the numerous other cannabinoids. Logically, a cannabis strain high in the psychoactive cannabinoid THC would yield different results from a strain high in the non-intoxicating cannabinoid CBD.

CBD and epilepsy treatment

There are increasing reports of CBD being used by parents to treat seizure disorders in their children. This use of a cannabinoid to treat seizures is not unfounded, the ever-popular THC molecule has been studied in children with seizure disorders. The results of early cannabinoid clinical studies and anecdotal findings for epilepsy are promising. CBD is becoming more popular than THC as a treatment because it provides relief, does not cause a "high," and acts on receptors that differ from those of THC.



Conclusion

For most patients, cannabis is safe, well-tolerated and carries fewer risks of adverse drug interactions than many other prescribed drugs. Nonetheless, cannabis is not a single drug; it's a complex plant compromised of numerous compounds from cannabinoids to terpenes. Influenced by these cannabinoid and terpene profiles, potential interactions, both good and bad, can vary from strain to strain. Drawing broad conclusions on how this “pharmacological treasure chest” interacts with other drugs is inevitably imprecise.

Nonetheless, given its therapeutic versatility, one of the most compelling arguments for cannabis is that it can actually reduce the need to combine multiple medications that have a high-risk potential of producing adverse interactions.

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