

THE THERAPEUTIC USE OF CANNABIS

CBD –THC EDIBLES

Eventually, edibles will appear in the market. They are already here in different forms and presentations and although not much is being said about them, the population of users is increasing associated with a decreased perception of harm from cannabis use.

Edibles are food products infused with cannabis extract, and this can be of mostly CBD from Hemp plant or a mixture of CBD/THC from the marijuana plant. Again, depending on the extraction method used, it will be a full spectrum extract or a concentrated extract.

When we take our CBD oils we are already taking THC also, even if in a very small quantity, and sometimes, some people will look for a way to take more THC for different reasons, medical, recreational or simply because the subjective and objective effects of a little more THC have been experienced and liked.

From a medical point of view, there is nothing wrong with augmenting the amount of THC that we take, as long as it is microdosed and taken along with our CBD, as we know that the CBD will counterbalances the effects of THC or synergizes with them.

At first sight, it is easy to see some advantages of edibles over smoking or vaping cannabis, they are more discreet, and the “stigma” associated with smoking is avoided, especially if it must be taken in work hours. Also the effect, or “high” of THC is more relaxing and calming, providing we respect the low dose principle; and the harmful toxic components of smoking are avoided. Smoking cannabis can cause chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in the long run, as well as cancer due to the co-occurring tobacco smoking. Regarding vaping, it is still a novel method and as such nothing is known about how it can affect our health through its carrier elements.

However, there some important considerations to take into account when we consume THC through edibles:

Potency

Through the gastrointestinal tract THC travels via the portal vein to the liver where it undergoes first pass metabolism and becomes 11-OH-THC, which is 5 times more potent than when it is inhaled. This is the reason why THC rich edibles are stronger and have a longer lasting effect.

However, the onset of action takes longer with edibles, from 30-90 minutes with a peak at 2 to 4 hours after ingestion and effects can take as long as 24 hours to dissipate. Different factors like age, weight, gender, eating habits, prescription drugs and others can affect

how soon, for how long and how strong someone will feel the psychoactive effects.

Also, with some chronic conditions where we want to use THC besides CBD, an extended duration of action is more helpful.

Overconsumption and Emergency room visits

Even if stronger, the low bioavailability of around 6-10% of oral administration, which gives a lower plasma concentration, and a delayed onset of effects, may cause both new and experienced users to consume higher than the intended dose, and thus it is very well known that edibles cause the majority of health care visits due to cannabis intoxication.

Overdosing with THC will produce from minor symptoms like nausea, dizziness and headache to transient psychotic symptoms as hallucinations, delusions and anxiety that will last only for the duration of the intoxication in healthy adults, but in some cases they can persist for several days. However it must be said that the only death known so far from cannabis consumption happened after the victim jumped from a balcony after having consumed a whole cookie two hours after the initial serving of 1/6 of it.

As the countries advance to legalize cannabis use, an increase in unintentional exposures in young children is

to be expected, with the calls to poison control centers also rising as has been seen to happen in USA. But while accidental exposures may become more common, the visits to emergency rooms in the pediatric population remain relatively low even if also augmented. And ingestion was the most common cause.

Among adults it is common to see overexposure and intoxication when they travel to places where cannabis is legal and also due to inadvertent ingestion.

Packaging and labeling rules

Knowing the precise amounts and relative concentrations of THC / CBD in edibles is vital, and to this day there is a lack of consistency in formulation and labeling of edibles. Colorado, the most advanced state in USA in cannabis regulatory policies, effective July 1 2016, mandated that medicinal and recreational edibles products contain no more than 100mg THC and have a clear demarcation of each standardized 10mg serving.

And besides the lack of standardization in formulation and quality control in the edibles there is the another issue that must be addressed by the edibles companies which is the fact that the information showed will only be useful if it is understood by costumers who usually have difficulties interpreting labels regardless of their

literacy. And even when they understand the label, not all can demonstrate how the dosing works.

Copyright Dr. Cedro

