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## CBD products require caution

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Q The longer this pandemic goes on, the more anxious I get, and I am not sleeping well. My sister suggested I try hemp gummies. I asked my doctor and he didn't know much about them. – HW, Winterville

A Although you can find dietary supplements on the web and in local stores that are made with hemp, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not permit the sale of hemp dietary supplements. They are however working on answering the questions about the science, safety and quality of hemp or Cannabis sativa L – a cousin to marijuana. Currently many manufacturers have received warning letters from FDA, and consumers are warned that “CBD has the potential to harm you.” Deborah Griffin wrote excellent articles in the Reflector last month, exploring the crop, the currently risky business for farmers and the lack of regulation for CBD oil, even as its popularity grows. Since you can easily buy CBD products today, we explored websites, visited local vendors and talked with food scientists to provide some additional information. Phil Maness, a fourth year Brody medical student, accepted the challenge to give us some basic information about CBD products.

For background, Cannabidiol (CBD) is one of two main active ingredients found in the plant cannabis, the other is Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). While their effects have not been fully studied, the THC component is considered to be more active in producing psychoactive and euphoric properties, commonly known as a “high.” CBD is not believed to produce the high, but there are published studies that show its potential

use for reducing nausea and vomiting, acting as an antioxidant and as an anti-inflammatory agent reducing pain, as well as having anti-tumoral properties. It's not surprising then that CBD has been anecdotally marketed as a treatment for anxiety, depression, insomnia, PTSD, anxiety in pets and opioid addiction. There have been studies showing potential benefit in most of these areas, but there are inconsistencies in the data between studies and none have been studied rigorously enough to draw conclusions regarding these benefits.

To be very clear, there is no evidence that CBD products can prevent or cure COVID-19, the flu or other viruses, regardless what a live or virtual salesperson might tell you. Many scientists believe that CBD is an area of study brimming with potential, with its perceived low side effect profile. The most common side effects are upset stomach and headache. The FDA's concerns are detailed on its website.

Locally, we found CBD in many different forms, such as tinctures, supplements, chocolate bars, drinks, honey products, e-liquids (used in vaping), flowers and buds (for smoking or tea), skin creams, gels and lotions, emollients and pet products. The clerks we spoke with varied greatly in their knowledge of the products. We did learn that products were categorized as "full spectrum," "broad spectrum," or "isolates." The "full spectrum" contains several cannabinoids (CBD, CBDABG, CBGA, CBC, CBCA, delta-9 THCA, delta-9 THC, delta-8 THC, and THCV), flavonoids, terpenes and THC, but in theory no more than 0.3 percent (the amount allowed by federal law). The "broad spectrum" is the same as "full spectrum" without the THCs. The "isolates" are just CBD.

As CBD is not regulated by the FDA, the plethora of products that contain CBD oil may or may not have the kind or amount of ingredients listed. Here we can offer a word of caution based on a personal experience, seeing firsthand someone lose their job from failing a drug screen due to testing positive to THC – despite the CBD supplement they took being advertised as having "no THC." A study done by the Institute for Research on Cannabinoids in 2017 found that about 7 out of 10 of studied products containing CBD were mislabeled, having significantly more, or significantly less CBD than labeled.

As one of our physician professors said, "The use of CBD products for health benefits in food or supplements is unproven, unregulated, and if sold with health/treatment endorsements, then illegal." Though the FDA has not shown a heavy hand in going after the sale of these products, they strongly advise against the use of CBD, THC, and marijuana in any form during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. And if a person is taking any medicines with a warning against eating grapefruit, note that CBD, too, can inhibit the enzymes that make the medicine effective.

We heard that using the tinctures (taken under the tongue daily – and “tasting bad”) would provide the best benefit. CBD “dosage need” recommendations varied greatly, and thus the suggestion to ask our health care provider how much to take. We didn’t find recommendations in our medical literature. Anecdotally, vendors told us the “edibles” – products like gummies, chocolate bars, honey, and flours to add to our smoothies were more like “boosters,” helpful when pain control was wearing off. As for hemp protein powder, seed oil and de-hulled hemp seed, they do have GRAS status from USDA – generally recognized as safe ingredients for foods and beverages. When trying to figure out the cost of using these products, it was like trying to compare apples and oranges.

Continued research into CBD as a source for future medical treatment that may be both cost effective and non-addictive is needed, but currently we would caution against using CBD.

For more <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/what-you-need-know-and-what-were-working-find-out-about-products-containing-cannabis-or-cannabis>.

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