

# NY Medics Warn of Cannabis-Related ‘Scromiting’ Epidemic

## New York’s Cannabis Epidemic: Growing Cases of ‘Scromiting’ Lead to Emergency Room Visits

**October 27, 2024** – Emergency rooms in New York are reportedly seeing a rise in cases of a severe reaction to cannabis use, known as “Scromiting,” a term that combines ‘screaming and vomiting.’ Officially called Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS), this alarming condition has led to an influx of patients experiencing severe vomiting, extreme pain, and, in some cases, life-threatening complications. Doctors are concerned as cases of CHS surge, raising questions about the safety of prolonged cannabis use, especially with today’s more potent cannabis products.

### Understanding Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS)

Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome is a rare but severe reaction observed in chronic cannabis users. Patients suffering from CHS often report intense bouts of nausea and vomiting, which can lead to dehydration, extreme discomfort, and, in severe cases, kidney failure or seizures. The defining symptoms of CHS can be debilitating, with sufferers often needing hospital care to manage the overwhelming nausea and abdominal pain that characterizes the illness.

Health professionals have observed that CHS symptoms tend to emerge in long-term users, typically after about a decade of regular cannabis consumption. Though still relatively rare, CHS is becoming a common sight in emergency rooms as more people use cannabis, often in stronger forms than were available in past decades.

### Why the Condition is Called “Scromiting”

The term “Scromiting” was coined to describe the agonizing combination of screaming and vomiting that CHS patients often experience during severe episodes. The intense pain leads some patients to scream as they vomit uncontrollably, a phenomenon that highlights the severe distress associated with the condition. According to the *Daily Mail*, emergency room doctors in New York now frequently encounter CHS cases, with one doctor describing it as a “bread and butter” diagnosis, indicating the condition’s increasing prevalence.

Some emergency room physicians report seeing CHS cases “every week, if not every day,” suggesting that the condition is far more common than initially thought. A recent *New York Times* investigation revealed that CHS, once considered rare, is now a more frequent diagnosis, making its impact on public health a growing concern.

### The Mystery of Hot Water Relief

One of the more unusual aspects of CHS is that many sufferers find temporary relief in hot baths or showers. Though the exact reason remains unclear, experts suspect that the heat somehow soothes overstimulated receptors in the body that are linked to the vomiting reflex. Unfortunately, this coping mechanism can lead to further complications, as patients often resort to scalding hot water in an attempt to alleviate their symptoms, sometimes resulting in burns and other heat-related injuries.

## **Theories Behind the Rise of CHS**

Researchers are actively exploring potential causes of CHS, as well as factors contributing to its rise among cannabis users. While the precise biological mechanisms remain unknown, some experts theorize that prolonged exposure to THC, the psychoactive compound in cannabis, overstimulates certain receptors in the brain and body. This overstimulation may eventually destabilize the body's natural vomiting reflex, leading to intense bouts of nausea and vomiting.

Additionally, the increasing potency of cannabis products may play a role in the rising cases of CHS. As cannabis legalization has spread, new products with higher THC concentrations have become widely available. Many of today's cannabis edibles, concentrates, and vapes contain significantly more THC than traditional marijuana flower, which may be overwhelming the body's cannabinoid receptors, especially with chronic, high-THC exposure.

## **The Challenge of Diagnosing and Treating CHS**

Diagnosing CHS can be difficult, as many patients and even healthcare providers are not familiar with the condition. Patients who use cannabis regularly may not associate their severe vomiting with cannabis use, as they may not be aware of the potential for CHS. As a result, CHS is often initially misdiagnosed as a gastrointestinal or psychological disorder, leading to ineffective treatments and prolonged suffering.

Furthermore, because CHS is not widely recognized, many sufferers do not understand that cannabis itself is the cause of their symptoms, particularly since cannabis is often perceived as an anti-nausea remedy. This misconception may lead some patients to increase their cannabis use in an attempt to reduce nausea, which only exacerbates their symptoms.

Treatment options for CHS are limited, as the only proven method for preventing recurrence is complete cessation of cannabis use. For many, this can be challenging, as chronic cannabis users may have been consuming the substance for years, often beginning in their teenage years. Withdrawal symptoms and dependency issues can make it difficult for individuals to quit, particularly without support and education about CHS.

## **Early Symptoms and Progression of CHS**

Doctors note that CHS may present with mild symptoms initially, such as occasional nausea, which can last for years before progressing to more intense "scromiting" episodes. These early warning signs may go unnoticed or be attributed to other health issues. Once the condition advances to severe vomiting episodes, however, the symptoms become unmistakable and often require emergency care.

A "scromiting" episode can last for days, with sufferers experiencing persistent vomiting that makes it difficult to retain food, liquids, or medication. The condition's cyclical nature means that once an episode subsides, it may recur if the individual continues using cannabis.

## **The Impact of Cannabis Potency and Usage Trends**

As cannabis products become more accessible and potent, health professionals worry that the prevalence of CHS may continue to grow. In states where cannabis is legal, dispensaries now offer a wide range of products, including highly concentrated THC oils, edibles, and vape cartridges. These products often contain far more THC than traditional marijuana, amplifying the potential for CHS in chronic users.

With cannabis legalization in New York and elsewhere, there has been a notable increase in cannabis use among young adults and teenagers. Many CHS patients reportedly started using cannabis in their teenage years, which aligns with research suggesting that early, prolonged exposure may increase susceptibility to the syndrome. Given the popularity of high-potency products, educating the public on potential risks associated with heavy cannabis use, especially over long periods, has become essential.

### **Public Health Response and Future Research**

Health officials are starting to recognize the need for greater awareness and understanding of CHS. Public health campaigns targeting both recreational and medicinal cannabis users may help raise awareness about the potential risks of prolonged cannabis use and the dangers of high-THC products. Additionally, medical professionals are calling for more research to better understand CHS, its underlying mechanisms, and effective treatment options.

Currently, research on CHS is limited, with much still unknown about why some people develop the condition while others do not. Experts hope that ongoing studies will shed light on the role of genetics, receptor sensitivity, and other factors that may influence an individual's risk of CHS. As cannabis continues to grow in popularity and use, gaining insight into conditions like CHS will be crucial for public health and safety.

### **Advice for Potential CHS Sufferers**

Doctors urge individuals who experience frequent vomiting and use cannabis regularly to consult a healthcare professional and consider the possibility of CHS. For those diagnosed with the syndrome, the primary recommendation is to stop using cannabis entirely to avoid recurrence. Given the challenge of quitting for long-time users, medical support and counseling can be beneficial in managing both CHS symptoms and potential withdrawal.

As cannabis use continues to expand, conditions like CHS highlight the need for informed consumption and moderation. While cannabis offers potential therapeutic benefits for many, understanding and acknowledging its potential risks is essential for ensuring a balanced and safe approach to its use.

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