

1 in 5 Young Adults Use Cannabis to Fall Asleep, Study Finds

Young Adults Turning to Cannabis and Alcohol as Sleep Aids

A growing number of young adults are turning to [cannabis or alcohol to help them fall asleep](#), according to a new study from the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research.

The university's Monitoring the Future Panel Study, which tracks health and behavior trends among Americans aged 19 to 30, found that 22 percent of young adults use either cannabis, alcohol, or both to help them sleep.

Of those, 18 percent reported using marijuana for sleep making it the most common substance for bedtime assistance while 7 percent said they use alcohol.

Researchers say the findings highlight a concerning shift in how young adults are coping with insomnia and stress, especially as the popularity and accessibility of cannabis continue to grow across the country.

Experts Warn That Using Substances for Sleep Can Backfire

While marijuana is often viewed as a safer alternative to prescription sleep medications, sleep experts caution that relying on substances to induce rest may ultimately do more harm than good.

"Using drugs or alcohol for sleep could backfire because they can interfere with the ability to stay asleep and with the quality of sleep," said Megan Patrick, research professor at the Institute for Social Research at U-M.

Studies published in the National Library of Medicine show that sleep deprivation is a widespread issue among American adults. Experts recommend between seven and nine hours of sleep per night, yet many young people fail to meet that standard often due to stress, irregular work schedules, or excessive screen time before bed.

Cannabis as a Sleep Aid: A Double-Edged Sword

Despite warnings from medical professionals, many cannabis advocates and consumers maintain that marijuana when used responsibly can offer real relief for those struggling with sleep.

Michigan, which legalized medical cannabis in 2008 and recreational use in 2018, has seen a surge in consumers turning to cannabis products marketed specifically for sleep.

A 2023 study published in the National Library of Medicine found that some individuals who used cannabis for sleep were able to reduce or stop their use of prescription sleep aids altogether.

Research suggests that cannabis strains with low to moderate levels of THC, the psychoactive compound responsible for euphoria can promote relaxation and ease the process of falling asleep. Meanwhile, CBD dominant cannabis can have calming effects at higher doses, though smaller amounts may actually stimulate alertness.

Still, experts note that the effectiveness of cannabis as a sleep aid can vary significantly based on dosage, strain, and frequency of use. Over time, dependence can develop, and long-term use may reduce the body's natural ability to regulate sleep cycles.

Why Good Sleep Hygiene Still Matters

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to emphasize that improving sleep hygiene not substance use is the healthiest and most sustainable way to improve sleep quality.

Getting at least seven hours of sleep each night has been linked to stronger immune function, healthier weight management, reduced stress, and improved cardiovascular health.

The CDC recommends several steps to promote better, more restorative sleep:

- **Maintain a consistent schedule:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- **Create a restful environment:** Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.
- **Disconnect before bed:** Turn off phones, TVs, and computers at least 30 minutes before sleeping.
- **Avoid stimulants:** Limit caffeine intake in the afternoon and evening.
- **Skip heavy meals and alcohol:** Both can disrupt the body's natural sleep rhythm.

Balancing Science, Stress, and Society

The University of Michigan's findings underscore a broader public health issue: young adults are increasingly self-medicating to cope with stress, anxiety, and sleeplessness in a world that rarely slows down.

While cannabis legalization has created new opportunities for wellness and alternative medicine, it has also blurred the lines between therapeutic use and dependence driven behavior.

As researchers continue to explore the effects of cannabis on sleep, experts urge young adults to weigh short-term relief against long-term consequences and to consider that the best cure for sleepless nights might not come from a dispensary or a bottle, but from building healthier sleep habits.

[Cannabis Risk Manager](#)

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060

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