

# Study Reveals CBD from Cannabis May Enhance Quality of Life for Autistic Individuals

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by differences in communication, a need for repetitive behaviors and routines, heightened sensitivity to sensory input, challenges in emotional regulation, and sometimes seizure conditions. Current estimates suggest that 1 in 36 people are autistic. Despite the large population of individuals with autism, there are limited treatment options available.

## Promising Findings from Recent CBD Study

A recent study published in the journal *Pharmaceuticals* has found that CBD, an active chemical in cannabis, may ease the symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder, leading to significant improvements in quality of life. This research builds on previous studies that suggested cannabis could benefit social communication and overall quality of life for autistic individuals.

## Previous Research and Human Trials

Earlier studies indicated a potential pathway for the beneficial effects of cannabis, showing in mice models that enhancing anandamide-mediated endocannabinoid signaling could improve social communication. Subsequently, a human study found that treatment with cannabis extract improved social communication and quality of life, reducing meltdowns, discomfort in crowded spaces, and poor appetite. In that study, quality of life improved in 95% of cases, and communication improved in 85% of cases.

## The Role of Endocannabinoids

Cannabis is thought to be helpful because it activates the endocannabinoid system, a natural system in the body responsible for various important functions. Autistic individuals have been found to have lower levels of natural endocannabinoids, which activate this system. Cannabinoids in cannabis may supplement these lacking endocannabinoids, helping to trigger the endocannabinoid system and address dysfunctions arising from endocannabinoid deficiency.

## The Recent Study

This latest study focused on the effects of high-CBD extracts, which do not produce the mind-altering effects associated with THC, another cannabinoid found in cannabis. Researchers used a retrospective, observational, and cross-sectional cohort model involving 30 autistic volunteers aged 5-18. Participants were given a daily dose of CBD for six months, with clinical and caregiver assessments conducted before and after the treatment period.

The results showed significant improvements in communication skills, attention, learning, eye contact, and irritability, as well as overall quality of life. However, some participants experienced negative side effects, such as irritability, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, daytime drowsiness, insomnia, self-injury, and intensification of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Most of these side effects were resolved by lowering the dose.

## **Future Research**

The study authors concluded that CBD may be a safe and effective option for treating symptoms of autism. Despite the promising results, the study's limitations include its design, lack of a control group, and small sample size. Additionally, the majorities of participants were male, under 18, and had co-occurring intellectual disabilities, limiting the generalizability of the findings to the entire autistic population.

These findings suggest that further research is warranted to explore the potential benefits of cannabinoids like CBD for autistic individuals.

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