

IN RARE FORM



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Cannabis and CRPS

by Jim Doulgeris

*Pot might be legal
But this ain't Cheech and Chong
So, check with your doctor
Before you spark up that bong*

That goes for gummies, too!

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) is a chronic pain condition that is difficult to treat. While some patients have reported positive results using cannabis to manage their symptoms, the medical and scientific evidence supporting its effectiveness is limited but there is solid evidence that use without proper medical supervision can be downright dangerous.

CRPS is a serious condition that is treated with powerful drugs. Introducing another drug with known, strong psychoactive components that can depress physiologic processes such as breathing where the interactions are unstudied and largely unknown is risky and reckless without professional guidance.

This is not to say that cannabis does not show promise. An Australian [biotech company](#) just received FDA approval to begin Stage 1 Human trials on a novel blend of THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis, specifically targeting treating CRPS pain flares.

There have been nearly two dozen studies that suggest that cannabis helps to relieve pain and

improve the quality of life for people in chronic pain, including those with CRPS. However, these studies are limited in size and methodology, and there are just not enough to be statistically significant to draw a definitive conclusion. For example, a 2020 review of 18 randomized controlled trials found that CBD was effective in reducing chronic pain in patients with conditions such as neuropathic pain, fibromyalgia, and osteoarthritis. Another study published in the Journal of Pain Research in 2021 reported that a combination of CBD and THC was effective in reducing pain and improving sleep in patients with chronic pain conditions.

While the effectiveness of cannabis for conditions like CRPS is promising, risks related to its legal status around the world are not. Use can have serious consequences depending on where you live including the United States.

First, let's explore how cannabis works medically. It contains two primary active compounds known as cannabinoids: delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

Both THC and CBD have potential medical applications, but the effects and benefits differ. THC is commonly used for pain relief, muscle spasticity, nausea, and appetite stimulation, whereas CBD is often used for its anti-inflammatory and calming properties. The ratio of THC to CBD and other cannabinoids can also affect the overall effects of cannabis products, leading to varying therapeutic outcomes. It is essential to consult with a healthcare professional before using any cannabis products for medical purposes particularly when used in combination with other medications like opioids and benzodiazepines.

There is some science to support how CBD may work.

One theory is that CBD interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system (ECS), which plays a role in regulating various physiological processes, including pain, inflammation, mood, and sleep. CBD has been shown to interact with both CB1 and CB2 receptors in the ECS, as well as other non-cannabinoid receptors, leading to a range of effects on the body.

Another theory is that CBD may modulate the activity of serotonin receptors in the brain, which are involved in regulating mood, anxiety, and pain perception. CBD has been shown to increase serotonin levels in the brain, which may contribute to its anxiolytic (calming) and analgesic effects.

Additionally, CBD has been found to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, which may help to reduce oxidative stress and inflammation in the body. This could be particularly relevant in conditions such as CRPS, where inflammation plays a significant role in pain and tissue damage.

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Walk Strong 2023 in Dallas Was a Huge Success!

We WALKED STRONG in support of CRPS this past weekend! Over 120 people walked the 3k and we raised over \$16,000 exceeding our goal of \$15,000. This money will help the CRPS community by funding research/treatment options, education, emergency patient assistance and more. Of course, I couldn't have done it without all the amazing sponsors and teams that helped me reach my goal.

J. Macklin Grill | Macklin's Catering Company | Chef Produce Dallas | Grin Pediatric Dentistry
Kilgore Mercantile & Music | 13:2 Events

So, what's next? We encourage you to share your experience and any photos you took with your donors and follow up with those who may not have contributed to your fundraising efforts just yet. Let your family, friends and colleagues know that there's still time to make an impact!

Thank you so much for participating! You have all made a real and profound difference in the lives of so many children and adults with CRPS/RSD.

Best Wishes,
Miller, Holly + Todd Kerr and RSDSA



RSDSA's 4th Annual Virtual CRPS Awareness Walk is Saturday, June 3rd!

In just one week we've jumped from 35 donations and a total of \$1,800+ to 94 donations totaling \$6,200+

We are 56% to goal and we can make it all the way!

On behalf of RSDSA and the individuals living with CRPS/RSD around the country, we want to thank everyone who has registered and donated to our 4th Annual Virtual CRPS Awareness Walk so far. With your help we are raising awareness and funds for RSDSA!

Kelly Considine, our 4th Annual Virtual CRPS Awareness Walk chair was recently [featured](#) in Connecticut's *Citizen Register* where she discussed the Walk, her journey with CRPS, and more. It's the perfect time to join her with getting the word out about our Warrior community and this rare disease!

Your walk donations support:

- Treating the Whole Person: Optimizing Wellness CRPS/RSD conferences
- Our Facebook Live series
- Courageous Kids Camp & Young Adult Weekends
- The RSDSA Community Newsletter
- The Jenkins Patient Assistance Fund
- The Maria Lane Fund
- Educational resources such as doctor referral lists and new patient information packets
- Accredited continuing education online courses for doctors and nurses
- Research including five ongoing studies and a new edition of *Complex Regional Pain Syndrome: Practical Diagnostic and Treatment Guidelines*

Your hard work and enthusiasm hit the mark.

You can help us make a REAL and PROFOUND difference in the lives of so many children and adults with CRPS/RSD.

If you don't want to register for the Walk, but still support RSDSA and the Walk, you can be a [donor here](#)! You can also donate by texting #4CRPS to 50155

Want a walk t-shirt? You can buy one on the Walk website [here](#) for \$25. Sizes range from youth small to Adult 3X.



For questions and more information on the walk, contact Jeri Krassner at jkrassner@rsds.org or 917-597-7256 and/or Kelly Considine at kelly.crpsawareness@gmail.com.

RSDSA's Young Adult Weekend Retreat is June 2nd-5th for Warriors 21 to 33

RSDSA is excited to announce that the next Young Adult Weekend Retreat will take place June 2nd-5th in Philadelphia! Young adults with CRPS between the ages of 21 and 33 will spend the weekend with people who fully understand what they are going through.



Our Young Adult Weekend Retreats have been a great success as they offer young adults with CRPS the opportunity to network, attend workshops, learn to advocate for themselves, and build a support system all while leaving time to sightsee and have lots of fun, unique experiences.

Date: June 2-5, 2023

Location: Holiday Inn Express Midway | 1305 Walnut Street | Philadelphia, PA 19107

Cost: \$250

Please note that all room fees are based on double occupancy. A \$50.00 non-refundable deposit is required to reserve your spot. You can also choose to pay in full at the time of registration. Attendees will have the option to pay by check or credit card.

We have limited space so please register as soon as possible.

Final payment of outstanding balance is due **Thursday, May 25, 2023** with all information and emergency forms.

With help from sponsors and donations, RSDSA will cover the additional costs for rooms, meals, and speakers.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact RSDSA's Young Adult Retreat Committee at yaphili.rsdsa@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Additionally, RSDSA's Young Adult Retreat Committee is looking to rebrand our Young Adult Group! Please submit your ideas for a new name and an image/logo as a .jpg or .pdf. The RSDSA Young Adult Weekend Retreat organizers will choose five submissions to vote on at the retreat and attendees will choose their favorite.

The submission with the most votes will be the new name and face of the Young Adult group and the winner will also receive a \$100 Amazon gift card! Please email your creations to Jkrassner@rsds.org.

You do not have to attend the Young Adult Weekend to send us a submission, but we would love to have you!

SAVE THE DATE!



**5th Annual RSDSA Long Island
CRPS Awareness Walk & Expo**

Saturday, September 9, 2023 from 8am - 2pm
Eisenhower Park | East Meadow, NY

Walk, Run, Roll 1K / 2.5K
Coffee, bagels, BBQ lunch,
crafts for kids, presentations,
and raffles. **RAIN OR SHINE!**



Learn more about the 5th Annual Long Island CRPS Awareness Walk & Expo taking place on Saturday, September 9th in East Meadow, NY via the Walk's Qgiv page [here](#).

Please Consider Supporting RSDSA With a Monthly Gift

RSDSA receives no governmental support. We are totally reliant on [donations](#) from the CRPS community and from our fundraising events. Please consider making a monthly donation. Currently, we receive monthly gifts from \$5 to \$100, but the sky's the limit! Dividing your gift over 12 months may make your budgeting easier. Thank you for your kind consideration.

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However, it is important to note that the exact mechanisms of action of CBD are still not fully understood, and further research is needed to fully elucidate its effects on the body.

THC works slightly differently but with dramatically different effects.

Yes, there are several scientific theories as to how THC may work to produce its pain-relieving effects.

One theory is that THC interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system (ECS), specifically by binding to CB1 receptors in the brain and central nervous system. This leads to the release of neurotransmitters, such as dopamine and serotonin, which can modulate pain perception and produce feelings of pleasure and relaxation.

Another theory is that THC may work by activating the body's natural opioid system. THC has been shown to stimulate the release of endogenous opioids, which are similar to drugs like morphine and are involved in pain relief.

Additionally, THC has been found to have anti-inflammatory properties, which may be beneficial in reducing pain associated with inflammatory conditions. THC can also reduce muscle spasms and improve sleep, which may further contribute to its pain-relieving effects.

However, it is important to note that THC also has psychoactive effects, which may not be desirable for some patients. The optimal ratio of THC to other cannabinoids, such as CBD, and the appropriate dosage of THC for pain management, may vary depending on individual factors such as age, weight, and the specific condition being treated. As with any medication, it is essential to consult with a healthcare professional before using THC or any cannabis-based products for pain management because there are dangers in combining THC and CBD in combination with other medications, especially opioids and benzodiazepines.

Both THC and opioids can produce sedative effects, and using them together can increase the risk of respiratory depression, which can be life-threatening. Therefore, it is essential to use caution when combining these medications and to consult with a healthcare professional before using them together.

Benzodiazepines are another class of medication that may interact with THC and CBD. Benzodiazepines are commonly used to treat anxiety and insomnia, but they can also produce sedative effects and increase the risk of respiratory depression when used with other depressant drugs. CBD can increase the levels of benzodiazepines in the blood, which can lead to increased side effects such as dizziness, drowsiness, and impaired coordination.

It is important to inform your healthcare professional about all medications you are taking, including THC and CBD, to ensure that there are no potential interactions or contraindications. They can advise you on the safest and most effective treatment options for your specific condition.

Furthermore, one of the most significant risks associated with using cannabis in combination with other medications is the potential for drug interactions. For example, cannabis can interact with drugs metabolized by the liver enzymes CYP3A4 and CYP2C9, which are involved in the breakdown of many medications, including certain antidepressants, blood thinners, and anti-seizure medications. This can lead to increased side effects or reduced efficacy of these medications.

In addition, chronic cannabis use has been associated with respiratory problems, cognitive impairment, and an increased risk of mental health disorders, including psychosis and schizophrenia. These risks may be particularly relevant for chronic disease patients who may already be at higher risk for these conditions.

Another concern is the potential for cannabis use to exacerbate symptoms of certain chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). For example, smoking cannabis can lead to increased heart rate and blood pressure, which can be dangerous for patients with cardiovascular disease.

In summary, chronic disease patients who are taking other drugs to treat their conditions should consult with a healthcare professional before using cannabis for medical or recreational purposes. It is essential to consider potential drug interactions and side effects, as well as the risks associated with chronic cannabis use.

All in all, it is simple. Use cannabis under medical supervision and only use medical grade cannabis so that the downsides can be minimized, and the upsides can be maximized.

The Next to the Last Thing: Is Cannabis safe?

It depends on several factors, including the dose, the method of use, and your health status. While cannabis has a relatively low risk of causing a fatal overdose, it can have short-term and long-term side effects.

Short-term effects of cannabis can include dry mouth, red eyes, impaired memory and concentration, increased heart rate, and altered judgment and coordination. These effects can be more pronounced in individuals who are new to using cannabis or who consume it in high doses.

Long-term use of cannabis has been associated with a range of health risks, including respiratory problems, decreased lung function, and an increased risk of psychotic disorders in vulnerable individuals. Additionally, regular use of cannabis can lead to dependence, and withdrawal symptoms can occur when use is discontinued.

Again, do so under the guidance of a healthcare provider, especially if you have a pre-existing medical condition or are taking other medications. It is also important to use cannabis responsibly and to avoid driving or operating heavy machinery while under its influence, so, keep that bulldozer in the garage.

One Last Thing

As to the legal risks, ensure that you follow local laws and statutes. The legal status of cannabis varies widely across states and countries, and there may be restrictions on its use or availability in some places. Additionally, while medical cannabis is legal in many states, it is still not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of any specific medical condition, including CRPS.

Use a search engine to ensure you have the most current information as to how to procure medical cannabis legally.

Here is a list of states, territories, and districts where medical cannabis is legal as of April 2023 in alphabetical order:

Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Guam | Hawaii | Illinois | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi | Missouri | Montana | Nevada | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New Mexico | New York | North Dakota | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Puerto Rico | Rhode Island | South Dakota | Tennessee | Utah | Vermont | Virginia | Virgin Islands | Washington | West Virginia

Looking for a CRPS Clinical Trial?

Visit clinicaltrials.gov and fill out the form under "Find a study." For example, RSDSA has funded a [Low-dose Naltrexone trial at Stanford](#) which is still recruiting.



Learn More About accessibleGO

[accessibleGO](#) is the leading accessible travel website in the United States for people with disabilities to book their travel needs and be part of a dynamic community of like-minded travelers. The site has proprietary accessibility information, discounted rates exclusively for people with disabilities, an unparalleled booking experience and a community of people with disabilities sharing experiences. Check it out ahead of your next trip!

RSDSA Celebrates 39 Years This May

RSDSA was founded on May 18, 1984! Keep an eye on our website and social media channels as we prepare for our 40th Anniversary!



We want your feedback!

Please send any suggestions or upcoming events of interest to our community to info@rds.org and please consider donating at rds.org/donate.

Thank you to our Title Sponsors

Our title sponsors make RSDSA events and awareness activities possible. Please join us in thanking and supporting them!

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