

## Cannabis 101

### What is Cannabis?

Cannabis, or *Cannabis sativa*, is a plant with a rich global tradition of medicinal, spiritual, culinary, and civil use. It is part of the Cannabaceae plant family, a small family of plants that likely originated within the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere, and has since spread worldwide. Humans have cultivated cannabis for longer than any other plant! There is evidence of its use for fiber, and perhaps medicine and inebriation for at least 12,000 years.

Despite its historical applications as a valuable herbal remedy and source of phytochemicals and plant fiber, cannabis has been broadly illegal for the past century. This illegality has hindered clinical research and limited the scope of scientific inquiry; still, determined medical practitioners, patient activists, caretakers, and allies have fought to bring the medical potential of cannabinoid therapy to the forefront, with increasing interest in and research of the subject in recent years.

We now know Cannabis to contain over 113+ *Cannabinoids* and 31+ *Terpenes*, synergistic chemical compounds with a wealth of potential medical uses and health benefits. As we currently understand it, these compounds together create the unique therapeutic potentials of different *strains*, or genetic varietals. This genetic and chemical diversity is what allows cannabis to help alleviate the symptoms of many conditions, and what makes the plant a promising pharmaceutical cornucopia. Your first step for safely consuming cannabis is a free in-person consultation with a physician.

### What is a “Strain”?

A strain is a term for a genetic variant, or subspecies, of *Cannabis sativa*. Like humans, cannabis plants can be almost infinitely diverse, but get most of their instructions on how to grow and what to grow into from their parents. Each strain will have its own unique characteristics, but will fall into one of three broad families - Sativa, Indica, or Hybrid.

#### **Sativa Strains**

Sativa strains hail from the African subcontinent, South America, and other equatorial lands. Sativa strains are typically sought out to boost mood, energy levels, creativity, and provide a cerebral or “head-heavy” experience. Common conditions people use Sativa strains to treat include:

- Depression
- Daytime Pain
- ADHD
- Nausea, Vomiting, and Loss of Appetite
- PTSD

### **Indica Strains**

Indica strains hail from Central Asia, Himalayan regions, and parts of the Middle East. Indica strains are typically sought out to provide analgesic (painkilling) effects, anxiety relief, appetite stimulation, and sedation - they provide a corporeal, or “body-heavy” effect. Common conditions people use Indica strains to treat include:

- Insomnia
- Anxiety and Panic
- Nausea, Vomiting, and Loss of Appetite
- Chronic Pain and Inflammation
- Spasms, Tremor, and Tension

### **Hybrid Strains**

A hybridized strain, or “hybrid,” is a plant that contains a mix of Indica and Sativa genetics. Growers may hybridize plants to get the most medical potential in one package - for example, combining uplifting and energizing effects of a sativa strain with the painkilling and calming effects of an indica. Hybrids will often express dominance - their effects will often be Indica-dominant or Sativa-dominant, depending on the characteristics they inherit from their parents. With so many hybridized plants, it can be helpful to think of cannabis as a spectrum from pure indica to pure sativa, with hybrid strains making up the space in between.

Strains may also be categorized by their cannabinoid content. Refer to our “Guide to Primary Medicinal Cannabinoids” and “Advanced Cannabinoid Guide” for more detailed information on individual cannabinoids. As an introduction, you may see strains listed as: THC Dominant, CBD Dominant, or Balanced

### **THC-dominant Strains**

These strains are psychoactive and most often used in the treatment of those who have previous experience consuming cannabis. Strains higher in THC are typically better suited for evening or nighttime use, as they tend to cause more functional impairment than balanced or CBD-dominant strains. THC can provide nausea relief, analgesia (pain relief), muscle relaxation, antidepressant and euphoric effects, and appetite stimulation. Strains high in THC are often used to treat:

- Chronic and Breakthrough Pain
- Nausea, Loss of Appetite, and Wasting
- PTSD
- Tremor and Convulsions

### **CBD-dominant Strains**

These strains are non-psychoactive, meaning they won't produce functional impairment. CBD can be well tolerated by almost anyone, and is a valuable treatment for those seeking symptom



relief without the associated cerebral effects. CBD is a potent anti-epileptic and anticonvulsant, an anti-nociceptive (painkiller), mood regulator, anti-inflammatory, anti-addictive, antiemetic, and more. High-CBD strains are most often used to treat:

- Epilepsy
- Addiction
- Mood, Anxiety, and Thought Disorders
- Chronic Pain and Inflammation, especially in Autoimmune conditions.
- Nausea

### **Balanced Strains**

A balanced strain possesses an equal or near equal ratio of THC and CBD. The psychoactivity of balanced strains is curbed by CBD's influence, and can allow for higher doses of THC to be administered while preserving daytime function. Like a hybrid, a balanced strain can combine the best of both worlds with symptoms relief from CBD+THC. Note that in the case of balanced indica strains, the combination of CBD and THC can sometimes intensify drowsiness and somnolence.