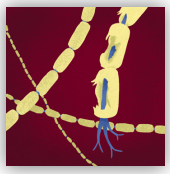
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS
AND MEDICAL CANNABIS

WHAT IS MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS?

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is an unpredictable disease of the central nervous system and can range from relatively benign to devastating.



Many researchers believe MS to be an autoimmune disease where the body begins to destroy its own tissues, specifically, the nerve-insulating myelin that cover nerve cells[1].

Most people experience their first symptoms between the ages of 20 and 40, with the majority of patients experiencing muscle weakness in their extremities and difficulty with coordination and balance. In the worst cases, MS can progress to partial or complete paralysis.

Most people with MS also exhibit transitory abnormal sensory feelings such as numbness, prickling, or "pins and needles" sensations and chronic pain[1].

"It could potentially help people who really need it and it's not being offered."
— Dr. Sanjay Gupta

WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

2.3 MILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE
OVER 400,000 AMERICANS
MORE THAN 10,000 ARE ADOLESCENTS & CHILDREN

1/300 UTAH HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST INCIDENCE RATES IN THE COUNTRY. IT IS BELIEVED ONE IN 300 INDIVIDUALS IS AFFECTED.

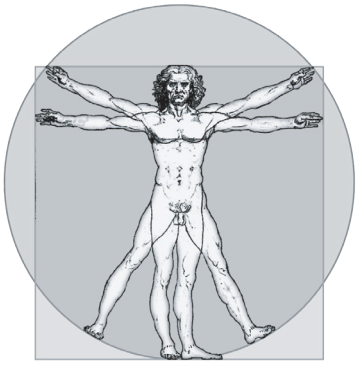
CANNABIS AND MS

In a clinical trial conducted in 2005, cannabis delivered in the form of a sublingual spray was demonstrated to be significantly more effective than placebo at reducing pain and sleep disturbances in MS sufferers[2-3]. And cannabis has been demonstrated to both reduce the frequency of muscle spasms and the severity of muscle spasticity. A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover study (considered the gold standard of clinical trials) found that 37 of 50 patients enrolled in the study showed improvements in mobility and a decrease in frequency of muscle spasms[4]. In addition, numerous studies have reported improvement in tremor, sexual dysfunction, bowel and bladder dysfunctions, vision dimness, dysfunctions of walking and balance (ataxia), and memory loss, as well as pain and spasticity[5-8].

A survey of current multiple sclerosis patients reported that more than 40 percent of respondents used cannabis to relieve symptoms of the disease. Among them, nearly three quarters said that cannabis mitigated their muscle spasms, and more than half said it alleviated their pain[9]. A similar survey found that 96% of Canadians living with MS believe cannabis is therapeutically useful for treating the disease[10]. Of those who admitted using cannabis to treat symptoms of MS, the majority cited relief of chronic pain, spasticity, and depression[10].

In that same vein, another survey, conducted by the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers, illuminated that many patients based in the United States that suffer from MS are interested in the possibility of introducing cannabis into their treatment regime[11]. Approximately 82% of respondents reported that they would consider using cannabis if it became legal in their states, and more than one-third of those surveyed had already spoken to their physicians about using cannabis to assist in mitigating their MS related symptoms[11].

SYMPTOMS OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



Numbness & tingling • Vision problems
Depression • Bowel dysfunction
Fatigue • Bladdar dysfunction • Dizziness
Pain • Walking difficulty • Muscle Spasms
Cognitive dysfunction • Weakness

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WHAT DOES THE NATIONAL MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT CANNABIS[12]?

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

The Society supports the rights of people with MS to work with their MS health care providers to access cannabis for medical purposes in accordance with legal regulations in those states where such use has been approved. In addition, the Society supports advancing research to better understand the benefits and potential risks of cannabis and its derivatives as a treatment for MS.

MEET AMANDA *from* SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

"After being put on many prescriptions over many years, I have been told more than once that they worry I may stop breathing in my sleep," says Amanda Ellis-Graham. At 35 years old, she has been living with multiple sclerosis for over 17 years. She was diagnosed when she was just 18.

"Living with MS at such a young age, and in my 20's, I've been faced with many challenges. I was working full-time and went to school. I just wanted to be a normal 20-year-old." A decade after being diagnosed, she was put on permanent disability due to the storm of symptoms that stole away her ability to function independently.

"The symptoms that I've dealt with range from insomnia, depression, fatigue, optic neuritis, neuropathy, and weakness." However, Amanda says it was her spasticity and vertigo that were the most disruptive. "I was unable to eat. I was house and bed bound for years...my strength was so bad I couldn't do simple everyday things like shower, make food or drive. I couldn't leave the house, yet I couldn't clean it. I couldn't read, and I couldn't use my computer. I didn't have a life".

She said the decision to try cannabis as a treatment option came after a lot of time and consideration. The original goal was to be able to cut back on the large doses of prescription medications that were devestating her body. However, the benefits she experienced were much more than she ever considered they could be. "It has helped me with anxiety, sleep, depression, appetite, bladder function, balance, flare-ups, and strength. It has helped my spasticity and even my vertigo. And nothing helps vertigo!"

This tremendous amount of relief has helped Amanda become active again. "I am able to shower. I am able to drive. It has changed my life and helped me get it back." These days, she is regaining her strength and developing a sense of hope and optimism for life. "I walked the mile at Walk MS for the first time this year and I plan on doing it again!" She no longer requires a wheelchair, and has regained the ability to drive.

Speaking about her belief in medical cannabis Amanda says: "It's giving me a lot of hope, for treatment of a disease with no cure. It's also a miracle I get to see and feel every day. I can't ignore it anymore. It seems selfish when it can be helping so many other people too. I hope that can be a reality soon for everyone in need."

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