

# Cannabidiol - Topic of the Month

UPDATED MARCH 2026

Cannabidiol, commonly known as CBD, has potential health risks. Understanding current use guidance can help staff respond accurately and consistently when asked about cannabidiol. Offering evidence-based guidance can support participants' informed decision-making.

## What is Cannabidiol?

The cannabis plant contains more than 100 compounds or cannabinoids. CBD (cannabidiol) and THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) are two of the most well-known compounds found in cannabis plants. THC is the part of cannabis that makes a person feel “high” and it can also be addictive. CBD does not make a person feel “high” and is not addictive. Although CBD has been promoted for potential anti-inflammatory, anti-anxiety, and analgesic properties, scientific evidence supporting these claims remains limited and inconsistent.

Under current federal law, cannabidiol is not approved for use in foods or dietary supplements in the United States. Despite this restriction, these products (gummies, capsules, and beverages) are widely available online and in retail settings, frequently marketed with health-related claims that have not been evaluated or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

While Minnesota law permits the sale of certain hemp-derived products, their legal availability does not necessarily indicate that these products are safe, effective, or suitable for the populations served by the WIC program.

To date, the FDA has approved only one prescription medication containing CBD. This medication has been determined to be safe and effective for its approved indication: the treatment of seizures associated with two rare and severe forms of epilepsy. Beyond this approved use, the FDA has identified potential safety concerns related to CBD, including risks to vulnerable populations. Below, we will explore some of the adverse effects related to CBD use.

## Noticeable adverse effects

- Drowsiness and fatigue- Feeling drowsy, lethargic, or mentally inactive.
- Gastrointestinal distress- Nausea, diarrhea, or loss of appetite.
- Mood changes- Irritability, agitation, and anxiety.
- Lightheadedness or dizziness- Caused by a decrease in blood pressure.

## Unnoticed adverse effects

- Drug interactions, affecting the metabolism of medications.
- Increased risk of side effects when taken with medication or other substances.

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- Possible harm to the fetus during pregnancy and the infant while breastfeeding.
- Liver injury with high doses.

Federally, the FDA continues to study CBD, including the effect of cumulative exposure, specifically in the elderly, young children, adolescents, pregnant, and lactating individuals.

**Learn more about cannabis in Minnesota:** [Cannabis- MN Dept. of Health](#).

**Learn more about cannabis:** [Cannabis 101 \(PDF\)](#).

## WIC's role

WIC policy [Section 6.4: Drug and Harmful Substance Use Education](#) requires that staff inform participants of potential risks of using drugs or other substances. WIC's role in preventing substance abuse is to educate parents and caretakers about substance use-related problems, with the intention of providing evidence-based information about the dangers of substance use and abuse during pregnancy and breastfeeding, as well as postpartum, so they can make an informed choice. Client education is essential to improving the health and wellbeing of all WIC participants.

## Related education cards:

- [Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs \(PDF\)](#)
- [Cannabis and Your Baby \(PDF\)](#)

In the case of CBD, providing education on the product being unregulated and unapproved might dissuade some participants from its use. Below are some talking points you may use with participants.

## Talking points

- Maternal smoking, inhaling, or consuming CBD or CBD-containing products while pregnant or breastfeeding may expose the fetus/infant to unknown harm.
- CBD has been detected in the breastmilk of nursing parents who used CBD products.
- Using CBD products that are unregulated with unproven benefits can be harmful to one's health.
- The perceived effects of using CBD products may lead users to delay seeking medical care.
- Lack of product regulation increases the risk that products may contain heavy metals, pesticides, and other ingredients.

If a participant asks for more information, you can refer them to their health care provider.

## Resources:

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1. [What You Should Know about Using Cannabis, Including CBD, When Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#) -FDA guidance on using THC or CBC while pregnant or breastfeeding. October 16, 2019
2. [Cannabidiol](#) - Drugs and Lactation Database (LactMed). February 7, 2019.
3. [FDA-What You Need to Know About CBD](#) - FDA answers questions about the science, safety, and quality of CBD products. November 25, 2019

### Sample scenario

Continue reading for a sample scenario demonstrating a conversation with a breastfeeding woman who shares an interest in CBD to help her relax and relieve stress.

### Skills and tools used in this scenario

- [PCS Counseling Skills](#): Using participant-centered services to evoke behavior change can be challenging, particularly when discussing supplements or medicinal products that have not been recommended by a medical professional. When approaching the topic of CBD, use reflective listening and affirmations to let the participant know you hear their concerns and are not judging them.
- [WIC Baby Behavior](#): Baby Behavior tools are essential when educating new parents to help them learn to recognize and respond to their baby's cues.
- [Asking Permission \(PDF\)](#): Always ask for permission before you share concerns, information, or resources. By doing this, participants might be more likely to consider the information you provide.

### Background

Sarah is visiting the clinic today for a new certification appointment for her and her new baby, Olivia. During the conversation, Sarah shares that the stress of managing Olivia's feeding schedule and ensuring that her breastmilk supply is adequate has been really stressful. Sarah's sister has used CBD in the past to manage stress, and she is thinking of trying it herself. Sarah also shared that she read on the CBD package that it can help calm nerves, and it comes in great flavors, so it will be easy to take.

### Discussion

**CPA:** Welcome back, Sarah. Congratulations on your beautiful baby! I see that you have named your baby Olivia. What a pretty name! I understand you are breastfeeding and have a few questions about your milk supply. I am happy to help with any concerns you have.

**Sarah:** Hi. Well, when I called to make today's appointment, I told the person on the phone what was going on, but I guess I can start over again.

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**CPA:** Oh, I understand it can be frustrating to repeat yourself. It does look like the phone staff included a note that you are concerned with low milk supply because Olivia is eating so frequently. Would you be okay sharing with me what a day of feeding looks like?

**Sarah:** Sure. Olivia eats every one to two hours during the day. Sometimes she goes a little longer between feedings at night. I feel like she is eating well when she's at the breast, but still she wants more so soon, and it's hard for me to get anything done.

**CPA:** I am happy to hear that the latching is going well, and it seems like the baby is feeding well at the breast. Being a new mom is hard, though. It feels like you only have time to feed your baby, and getting things done around the house falls to the side.

**Sarah:** Exactly. I have been so stressed out watching the dishes and laundry pile up. I get so little sleep; I feel like something has to change. I was thinking of trying those CBD gummies I've seen around town. My sister says they really helped her, and when I read the package, it says it will relax you. I am worried if it is safe while breastfeeding.

**CPA:** You really care about your baby and what you are putting in your body while feeding her! I think I can help! I could share some information about normal feeding behavior, as well as what I have learned about CBD, if that is okay with you.

**Sarah:** At this point, anything would be helpful.

**CPA:** Let's start with the feeding. Did the staff share the baby behavior information with you at your pregnancy appointment?

**Sarah:** Oh, yeah. I remember watching a video on hunger cues. That has helped me to know when my baby is really, truly hungry, and not crying for another reason. I like that I can look at the videos on the app on my phone, too.

**CPA:** Great, you really prepared yourself for recognizing those feeding cues. I can tell you that frequent feeding in the beginning helps to establish your milk supply. Also, with Olivia's stomach being so small, she knows best when she is full; following her cues is one way to know she is feeding well.

**Sarah:** Huh, that makes sense. It is important to me that I breastfeed. I want my baby to be healthy. What about the CBD gummies, though? I am also worried about the stress I'm under.

**CPA:** First of all, I want to thank you for sharing your concerns with me. I can tell this is important to you. Let me share what I have learned about CBD. There was a recent study finding CBD in the breastmilk of moms who were taking the supplement. The FDA has advised that pregnant and nursing women avoid using CBD.

**Sarah:** That's really scary! I would never do anything to put Olivia at risk. I guess CBD's not a good option for reducing my stress.

**CPA:** I believe you wouldn't. I'm so happy that you asked me about CBD today, so I could share this information with you too! Could I make a suggestion for addressing your stress?

**Sarah:** Okay.

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**CPA:** It sounds like what you're experiencing is quite normal for new moms. There are support groups in our community where you can share your frustrations and find other moms who understand what you're going through. I can share a few that are available to you. However, if you feel that things are getting out of control and you are not able to find the support you need, it may be time to contact your doctor.

**Sarah:** Thank you, you really have been helpful.

**CPA:** You're so welcome. I'm glad that I was able to answer some of your questions, and I hope I eased your stress! I encourage you to view more of the Baby Behavior videos, as they may continue to be helpful as your baby grows. I'll share the resources we spoke about, and again, please contact your doctor if you feel like things are not improving!

Be sure to summarize what was discussed at the end of the appointment and, most importantly, provide contact information for any referral mentioned.

## References- complete listing of hyperlinks

[Cannabis- MN Dept. of Health](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/cannabis/index.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/cannabis/index.html>)

[Cannabis 101](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/cannabis/docs/cannabis101.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/cannabis/docs/cannabis101.pdf>)

[Section 6.4: Drug and Harmful Substance Use Education](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch6/sctn6_4.pdf)

([https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch6/sctn6\\_4.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch6/sctn6_4.pdf))

[Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/gendrugs.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/gendrugs.pdf>)

[Cannabis and Your Baby](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/gencannabis.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/gencannabis.pdf>)

[What You Should Know about Using Cannabis, Including CBD, When Pregnant or Breastfeeding](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/what-you-should-know-about-using-cannabis-including-cbd-when-pregnant-or-breastfeeding)

(<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/what-you-should-know-about-using-cannabis-including-cbd-when-pregnant-or-breastfeeding>)

[Cannabidiol](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK535598/#LM1442.drug-levels-effects) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK535598/#LM1442.drug-levels-effects>)

[FDA-What You Need to Know About CBD](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/what-you-need-know-and-what-were-working-find-out-about-products-containing-cannabis-or-cannabis) (<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/what-you-need-know-and-what-were-working-find-out-about-products-containing-cannabis-or-cannabis>)

[PCS Counseling Skills](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/counseling.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/counseling.html>)

[WIC Baby Behavior](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/bb.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/bb.html>)

[Asking Permission: Ninth in a Nutrition Assessment Series](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/2022/topic/0316na.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/2022/topic/0316na.pdf>)

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Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St. N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, [health.wic@state.mn.us](mailto:health.wic@state.mn.us), [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us); to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

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