

# Cannabinoid Hyperemesis

## WHAT IS CANNABINOID HYPEREMESIS?

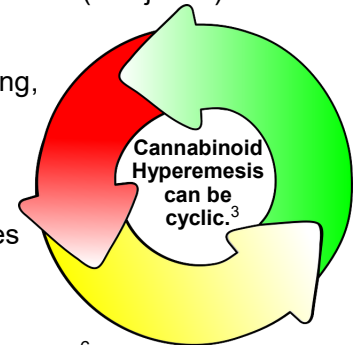
Cannabinoid Hyperemesis is a newly recognized diagnosis characterized by chronic cannabis (marijuana) use.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS?

Patients with Cannabinoid Hyperemesis can experience abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, excessive thirst, and a desire to compulsively take hot showers.<sup>2</sup>

## WHEN WAS CANNABINOID HYPEREMESIS DISCOVERED?

Since about 2004, doctors around the world have increasingly observed a cluster of symptoms associated with chronic marijuana use, and sometimes describe it as episodes of severe vomiting, or Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome.<sup>3</sup>



How a substance known for its anti-nausea properties would cause this syndrome is unknown.<sup>6</sup> Some researchers speculate chronic marijuana use can lead to desensitization or down-regulation of CB<sup>1</sup> cannabinoid receptors in the brain. In other words, the drug has stopped working and is now the cause of, or has exacerbated, the symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

## CAN A YOUNG PERSON GET CANNABINOID HYPEREMESIS?

Cannabinoid Hyperemesis should be considered in younger patients with long-term marijuana use and recurrent nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.<sup>4</sup>

## WHY IS THE DIAGNOSIS OF CANNABINOID HYPEREMESIS IMPORTANT?

The diagnosis and management of Cannabinoid Hyperemesis is of clinical importance because of marijuana's widespread use in the United States. Given the very recent recognition of Cannabinoid Hyperemesis and the scarcity of literature about this condition, it is likely to be under-recognized and under-diagnosed.<sup>3</sup> Failure to recognize it can lead to misdiagnoses and may also lead to invasive, expensive and unproductive diagnostic testing, psychiatric referrals and ineffective treatments - as well as frustration for the patient and physician.<sup>4,6</sup>

## IS CANNABINOID HYPEREMESIS APPEARING IN EMERGENCY ROOMS?

"Cannabinoid Hyperemesis is a real problem that I am seeing more and more frequently in the ER where I work. These patients are often anxious and desperate as they have unrelenting forceful vomiting and complain of severe abdominal pain. Medications may only partially improve their symptoms. Providing nutrition through feeding tubes may become necessary when the patient is badly malnourished. They are often hospitalized and undergo many costly tests and procedures to rule out a variety of possible illnesses. Even after the patient is diagnosed with Cannabinoid Hyperemesis and advised to discontinue using marijuana, many of these patients continue to do so as they are convinced marijuana could not be causing their symptoms. This often results in repeated ER visits and severe chronic problems," said David Rosenberg, MD of Central Oregon Emergency Physicians.<sup>5</sup>

## WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR CANNABINOID HYPEREMESIS?

"There is no proven treatment other than stopping marijuana use.<sup>6</sup> "It takes long term abstinence from marijuana to alleviate the symptoms," said Eric Martin, MAC, CADCI, CRM, CPS, a state and nationally certified Addictions Counselor in Oregon with over 26 years of experience. "Clients report that loss of appetite may persist for weeks or months after marijuana use has stopped," he said.<sup>7</sup>

## HOW CAN CANNABINOID HYPEREMESIS BE PREVENTED?

- 1) To avoid spreading misinformation, share health education that is vetted and cited from evidence and science-based research.
- 2) Encourage people who **do not use** marijuana to **not start**.
- 3) Encourage people who do use marijuana that treatment services are available to help them stop.<sup>8</sup>



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## Citations and References

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