CBD Oil for Cerebral Palsy: Studies You Need to Know About

Does it really work?

Rather than refer to a single condition, cerebral palsy (CP) relates to a group of medical issues that impact coordination and movement. It is a lifelong condition that is caused by a problem with the brain that occurs before, during, or soon after a child is born. It often occurs when the brain doesn’t develop properly while in the womb. However, some children are affected by cerebral palsy because their brain is damaged during birth or soon after they are born.

Causes of the condition include:

- Meningitis.
- A serious head injury.
- The child’s mother catching an infection during the pregnancy.
- The brain not getting enough oxygen for a short period during a difficult birth.
- Reduced blood and oxygen supply to the brain.
- Bleeding in the baby’s brain.

Cerebral palsy is the most common childhood motor disability and, according to recent figures, 1 in 400 Irish children have been identified with the condition. At present, there is no cure for cerebral palsy, but there are a few interesting studies which suggest that CBD could potentially reduce the symptoms of the condition.

Types of Cerebral Palsy & Symptoms

There are four different types of CP. The condition is broken down into these categories to outline how a patient’s brain damage impacts on their overall mobility. Also, each cerebral palsy type is categorized according to the type of movement issues and the parts of the body affected.

There are two terms you will need to be aware of to understand the symptoms: Hypotonia results in low muscle tone, meaning that there is a lack of strength and...
firmness; **Hypertonia** refers to high muscle tone, which causes rigidity and spasmodic movement.

**Spastic CP**

This is the most common form of cerebral palsy, affecting up to 80% of people living with the condition. It is caused by damage to the motor cortex in the brain, which is responsible for controlling voluntary movement. Symptoms include:

- Stiffness in one part of the body.
- Abnormal gait.
- Permanently tightened joints or muscles.
- Awkward reflexes.

**Athetoid Cerebral Palsy**

This affects 10% of CP sufferers and involves a mix of hypotonia and hypertonia. The cause is damage to the basal ganglia or cerebellum in the brain; the former regulates voluntary motor function and eye movements, while the cerebellum controls coordination and balance. Symptoms include:

- Rigidity or stiffness in the body.
- Posture problems.
- Involuntary movement in the torso, face, and limbs.
- Problems with feeding.

**Ataxic Cerebral Palsy**

This is a relatively rare form of CP and is typically caused by damage to the cerebellum. Symptoms include:

- Speech difficulties.
- Feet being spread apart while walking.
- Depth perception problems.
- Tremors and shakiness.

**Mixed Cerebral Palsy**

This is another rare form of CP and occurs when there is damage to more than one area of the brain. The most common mixed CP diagnosis is one of spastic and athetoid.
Diagnosis, Outlook & Traditional Treatments

Symptoms of cerebral palsy are not always clear immediately after a baby is born. It can take two or three years before an accurate diagnosis is made. Clear warning signs include:

- A child walking on his/her tip-toes.
- Uncontrolled and random movements.
- Weak legs and arms.
- The child seeming too floppy or stiff.
- Developmental milestone delays; examples include not walking by 18 months or sitting up by eight months.
- Learning disabilities, vision problems, or difficulties swallowing food.

CP affects each person differently, but here are some likely scenarios:

- The condition will probably limit a child’s independence and activities, even though they may end up living a relatively independent life.
- Although the original brain problem doesn’t get worse, CP places a lot of strain on the body, meaning that joint stiffness and other issues are likely.
- Sending your child to a special needs school may be necessary.
- Most CP sufferers live for decades, although the average life expectancy is below normal.
- Cerebral palsy sufferers face tough challenges every day and it can be difficult to cope. As a result, an above average number of CP patients have depression compared to the rest of the population.

With no known cure, the best that any treatment can do is reduce the impact of symptoms and help the individual live a normal and independent life. Typical treatments include:

- Medication to treat muscle stiffness.
- Surgery to deal with growth or movement problems.
- Occupational therapy to help carry out everyday tasks.
- Speech therapy to improve communication.
- Physiotherapy to reduce problems with movement.

How Could CBD Help Cerebral Palsy?

While we will look at the most important study on the topic below, it is important to note that there is a lack of hard evidence that links CBD with an improvement in CP
Reduced Pain

CP patients with rigid, locked muscles are in severe pain most of the time. A 2016 study* by Barth Wilsey et al., published in the Journal of Pain, found that CBD users with a spinal cord injury felt less pain after using the oil.

Spasticity

A 2012 clinical trial* by Jody Corey-Bloom et al., published in CMAJ, was conducted at the San Diego School of Medicine. The study involved giving 30 multiple sclerosis patients a placebo or synthetic THC. Those who used the weed experienced a 33% reduction in spasticity compared to MS patients who consumed the placebo. There were also noticeable reductions in perceived muscle-related pain.

Seizures

Up to 50% of kids with CP suffer from subsequent seizure disorders. However, CBD is fast gaining a reputation for being able to reduce the number of seizures associated with conditions such as Lennox-Gastaut syndrome (LGS) and Dravet syndrome.

In June 2016, GW Pharmaceuticals announced positive results from phase three of a clinical trial* of Epidolex, a synthetic drug containing CBD. It was used on 171 patients with LGS aged 2-55, with all of them were using at least one antiepileptic drug (AED). At the end of a 14-week period, those who took Epidolex along with their AED experienced a 44% reduction in seizures compared to a 22% reduction in those who used an AED only.

Important Studies on the Impact of CBD on Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral palsy has a significant impact on the child and his/her family. While up to 10,000 babies are born with the condition annually, as many as 1,500 are not diagnosed until they go to school. Almost half of children with CP are unable to walk independently and parents are desperate for a solution. At present, the total lifetime care costs to look after a child with cerebral palsy is €5 million. Small wonder then that parents are keen to find out more about what CBD can do for their kids.

DISCLAIMER
Cannabis Oil CBD is classed as a food/dietary supplement. Whilst this product has had amazing results for many people with all types of ailments, we cannot (and Do not) CLAIM that it has any specific healing powers. Feedback and reviews from users of this product speak for themselves. We encourage you to research CBD Oil for yourself – we’re certain you will be both encouraged and inspired by your findings!

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Luba Blumkin performed one of the most relevant studies into CBD’s effects on CP with the aid of a marijuana supplier called Tikun Olam. The 2017 study*, which was conducted by the Wolfson Medical Centre near Israel’s capital, Tel Aviv, analysed the effect of CBD on 36 children (aged 1-17) with cerebral palsy. 20 of the volunteers have finished the testing stage.

According to Blumkin, the study focused on kids with the highest level of motor disorders. Such children also have associated problems such as painful bowel movements and problems chewing and swallowing. The pain gets worse over time and results in sleeping difficulties. After analysing the children for two months to ensure their conditions were stable, the team gave the kids CBD oil three times a day via a feeding tube or orally.

Within four months, there was a noticeable improvement in their condition. Blumkin asserts that the biggest positive change was in motor function. Other benefits included less pain and an improvement in bowel movements and sleep. One of Tikun Olam’s research managers, Lihi Bar-Lev Schleider, said that while the CBD oil was safe, it can’t be used as the only treatment.

The Wolfson Medical Centre study was extremely important because, up until that point, there was relatively little data on CBD’s effect on cerebral palsy. A survey study* by Adam Hirsh et al., published in the March 2012 edition of the *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation*, found that CBD oil provided the best relief for CP patients when compared to several other medications. However, only 5% of the sample group had ever used the oil for pain.

**Final Thoughts on CBD & CP**

Overall, there is a suggestion that CBD oil could have medical efficacy for individuals with cerebral palsy. It could help with symptoms including spasticity, sleep disturbance, and pain. CBD is a non-intoxicating compound of cannabis and is legal in Ireland as long as the THC content is less than 0.2%! As it doesn’t get you high, medical researchers believe it is safe to give to children, although more studies are needed in the future.

An increasing number of people living with cerebral palsy claim that CBD has made a significant positive impact. Terri Aghast was born with CP and underwent dozens of surgeries. She spent 12 years in braces and was also wheelchair-bound on several occasions. After using cannabis for the first time, she could see the difference in how she walked, and felt the difference throughout her body. Of course, we can’t guarantee that you will have a similar experience because CBD affects everyone differently.
It is important to note that we at Cork CBD Products are not clinical practitioners, and thus are not medically qualified to give advice on the use of CBD oil for Cerebral Palsy – or any other medical condition for that matter. CBD is not as of yet an approved medication for CP, and as such we recommend you speak with your Doctor if at all possible about implementing any kind of a new treatment. As is always the case, anybody thinking of changing or stopping a current treatment should first consult with a medical professional.