

Cannabinoid receptors and Hashimoto's: Cannabis-free tips

If medical marijuana has done anything, it has been to educate us about our own endocannabinoid system (ECS) — a system of receptors on cells that play a role in inflammation, appetite, pain, mood, memory, and even cancer prevention. These receptors have come to light because they respond to compounds in cannabis, or marijuana. Because of their role in immune and autoimmune health, it's worth knowing about the ECS when you have Hashimoto's hypothyroidism.

But don't worry, you don't necessarily need cannabis to promote healthy endocannabinoid activity and manage Hashimoto's hypothyroidism.

A functioning ECS, which is vital to good health, produces its own cannabinoids and doesn't need them from cannabis. For instance, the cannabinoid anandamide is so powerful researchers call it the "bliss molecule" because of its role in happiness and higher thought processes. The ECS plays an important role in preventing or dampening autoimmune expressions such as Hashimoto's hypothyroidism.

However, researchers have discovered some people have a [endocannabinoid deficiency](#). This can lead to chronic pain disorders, depression, irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety, and more serious disorders. Some suggest this deficiency may be genetic.

It's believed an ECS deficiency explains why cannabis is medicinal for some people. Cannabis contains more than 100 different cannabinoids, including THC, which produces the psychoactive effect cannabis is most known for. Cannabis also contains cannabidiol (CBD) and terpenes. These compounds are not psychoactive.

CBD has come to be recognized as the compound responsible for many of the medicinal effects of cannabis. Terpenes are the compounds that give cannabis its distinctive aroma and are also medicinal.

Controversy exists around whether CBD and terpenes are therapeutic individually, or whether these compounds work better synergistically in a whole plant form. There is also controversy over whether CBD from industrial hemp, a non-psychoactive form of cannabis, is as effective as CBD from marijuana, which has higher THC levels.

Currently, no established guidelines exist in the use of these medicinal compounds for Hashimoto's hypothyroidism, although the internet is filled with anecdotal stories.



Boosting your endocannabinoid system naturally

Psychoactive cannabis and its constituents, such as CBD, is legal in only about half of the states in the US. CBD from industrial hemp is more widely available. Outside of the US it is legal in a few countries, decriminalized in a number, and strictly illegal in others.

Because the ECS produces its own cannabinoids, it is possible to boost the activity of this system without using cannabis. Following are some suggestions on how to do this if you have Hashimoto's hypothyroidism:

- Avoid alcohol. The stress and inflammation caused by regularly drinking alcohol can exhaust the ECS. Preserve its integrity by avoiding this health-sapping spirit.
- Get bodywork. Research shows that bodywork such as a chiropractic adjustment, massage, or acupuncture can more than double anandamide, the "bliss" cannabinoid.
- Eat lots of leafy greens. Leafy greens contain a terpene that activate cannabinoid receptors and can help combat inflammation and autoimmunity.
- Eat more omega-3 essential fatty acids. Some researchers say an omega-3 deficiency will cause the ECS to not function properly. Make sure you get plenty of omega 3 in your diet (and not too much omega 6), or supplement with fish, algae, emu, or hemp oils.
- Exercise. Some researchers believe the "high" from exercise is caused by increased ECS activity. Just be careful not to overdo it or make it stressful, which can deplete the ECS. Contact my office if you have more questions about how to manage Hashimoto's hypothyroidism.

