Nearly Half of People With Uncontrolled Asthma Smoke Marijuana

Almost 50% of cannabis users with asthma say they smoke weed, while one third vape pot.

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A new survey published in Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), reveals that most people with asthma who use marijuana inhale the drug by smoking, while one third vaped it. In addition, a significant number of individuals with uncontrolled asthma said they smoke pot.

The Adult Allergy & Asthma network conducted an anonymous online survey to assess cannabis use and attitudes in people with asthma and allergies. Most respondents were white females under age 50.

Of the survey's 489 respondents, 88 admitted to smoking marijuana. Two thirds of those who used cannabis reported using it for medical or medical/recreational purposes.

Among those who consumed pot 53.4% smoked it, while 35.2% vaped the drug.

Cannabis users declared that they experienced good effects, such as reduced pain, calm and improved sleep, more often than negative consequences, such as coughing, increased hunger and anxiety.

However, almost 20% of respondents said they sustained coughs directly related to smoking cannabis. Additionally, about 60% of marijuana users currently suffered from asthma, with uncontrolled asthma seen in 40% of pot smokers. (Signs of uncontrolled asthma include daily shortness of breath, chest tightness, wheezing and coughing.)

Only 41% of marijuana smokers said their doctors asked about their cannabis use, with nearly the same proportion of patients (38%) stating that they wished to have these discussions with their providers.

"In order to more completely manage their allergy/asthma patients, allergists should increase their knowledge about cannabis and inquire about cannabis use, including types of cannabinoid, route of use, reasons for use and adverse effects," suggested William Silvers, MD, an allergist, ACAAI member and an expert on cannabis allergy, who was one of the study's coauthors.

Silvers also stressed that efforts should be made to reduce cannabis smoking. He recommended safer ways for people to use marijuana, such as consuming edibles and sublingual tinctures—drops of marijuana that can be applied under the tongue.

Researchers plan to conduct studies on more diverse groups to further explore marijuana's effects on asthma and other allergic disorders.

For related coverage, read "Certain E-Cigs May Aggravate Asthma" and "E-Cigarettes Can Increase Lung Disease Risk."

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