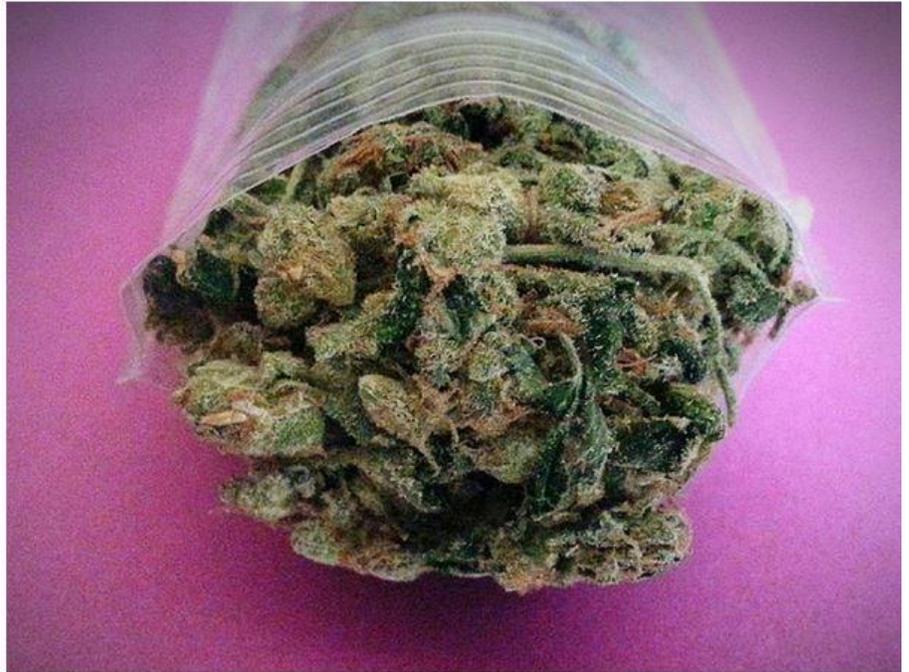


Skin

Cannabinoids May Soothe Certain Itchy Skin Conditions

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Cannabinoids, the chemical compounds in marijuana, may help with certain skin conditions, such as eczema and psoriasis. (Photo: Getty Images)

Cannabinoids, the chemical compounds in marijuana, have been studied by the medical community for help with treating nausea, pain, and anorexia, among other issues. Now researchers say cannabinoids can help with an entirely new area: skin diseases.

That's the takeaway from an April 2017 study published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, which discovered that the anti-inflammatory properties in cannabinoids make them useful for treating eczema, psoriasis, and atopic and contact dermatitis.

For the study, researchers analyzed medical literature and found that cannabinoids largely help with itching. In one study, for example, eight out of 21 patients who used a cannabinoid cream twice a day for three weeks completely eliminated severe itching. (Scientists say cannabinoids might have reduced the dry skin that caused the itch.)

The study's senior author, Robert Dellavalle, MD, an associate professor of dermatology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, said in a press release that cannabinoid creams and treatments may be effective because they're anti-inflammatory. In the studies Dellavalle reviewed, he and his colleagues discovered that THC — the active ingredient in marijuana — reduced skin swelling and inflammation in mice. "These are topical cannabinoid drugs with little or no psychotropic effect that can be used for skin disease," he said.

It's difficult to study cannabinoids in the U.S. because of marijuana's classification by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) as a Schedule I substance, which places it in "the most dangerous class of drugs" — along with heroin, LSD, and ecstasy — and makes all forms of marijuana illegal under federal law. In order to study the plant, researchers must obtain a special license from the DEA. Researchers in the latest study stress that their conclusions were based on laboratory models, not large-scale clinical trials, owing to the difficulty of actually performing them with marijuana.

But Joshua Zeichner, MD, a New York City dermatologist and director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center (who did not work on the study), tells Yahoo Beauty that there is a growing body of research that supports the use of cannabinoids, including cannabis oil, in treating skin conditions ranging from eczema to acne. “Cannabis oil has many benefits for the skin,” he says. “It contains high levels of fatty acids, which help hydrate and repair damaged skin.” It may even help regulate oil production in the skin, he adds.

Unlike marijuana in its whole form, the cannabis oil used in skin care products doesn’t give users a high because it doesn’t contain significant levels of THC, says Zeichner, who recommends the skin care product.

Gary Goldenberg, MD, medical director of the dermatology faculty practice at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, tells Yahoo Beauty that cannabinoids can be added to topical creams to decrease inflammation and soothe skin, as well as help with wound healing.

Goldenberg says he doesn’t have any concerns about using cannabinoid creams. “Products are safe using cannabinoid extracts,” he says. “Many topical products are already approved and in use.”

Zeichner adds that you can use topical products with cannabinoids just as you would use a product with any other botanical oil, such as sunflower seed oil. “These products are safe to use, but like any other product, if you develop a rash from it, discontinue it right away,” he says.