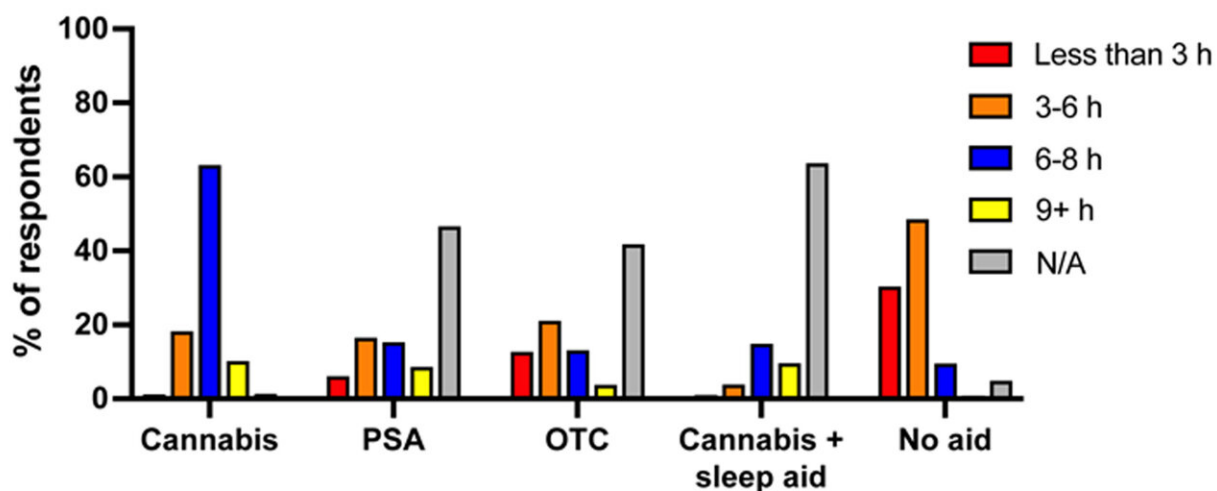


Cannabis users appear to be relying less on conventional sleep aids

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Percentage of sample reporting hours of sleep following use of various sleep aids. N/A: not applicable. Credit: *Exploration of Medicine* (2023). DOI: 10.37349/emed.2023.00171

Most people who reported using cannabis to get a good night's rest in a recent study have quit using over-the-counter, or prescription sleep aids altogether.

More than 80% of the 1,255 cannabis users surveyed for the Washington State University-led analysis reported no longer using over-the-counter

or prescription sleep aids such as melatonin and benzodiazepines. Instead, they had a strong preference for inhaling high-THC cannabis by smoking joints or vaporizing flower, two fast-acting methods that previous research has shown can help with difficulty falling asleep.

Interestingly, around half of the people in the study also specifically reported using cannabis strains containing CBD and the terpene myrcene, an aromatic plant compound found in hops, basil, and other plants in addition to cannabis.

"One of the findings that surprised me was the fact that people are seeking the terpene myrcene in cannabis to assist with sleep," said Carrie Cuttler, senior author of the study and associate professor of psychology at WSU. "There is some evidence in the [scientific literature](#) to support that myrcene may help to promote sleep, so cannabis users seemed to have figured that out on their own."

For the study published in the journal [Exploration of Medicine](#), Cuttler and psychology doctoral student Amanda Stueber analyzed self-report data from individuals on their use of cannabis and other sleep aids or no sleep aids, and what effects they perceived the different products to have. Data for the study were provided by Strainprint, a Canada-based medical technology company.

Participants reported varying morning outcomes and side effects. Cannabis users more commonly reported feeling refreshed, focused, and better able to function in the morning after using cannabis, along with experiencing fewer headaches and less nausea compared to when they were using traditional sleep aids.

However, cannabis users also reported feeling sleepier, as well as more anxious and irritable in the morning after using cannabis compared to other sleep aids. They were also more likely to report experiencing dry

mouth and red eyes after using cannabis.

"In general, the use of cannabis for sleep-related issues was perceived as more advantageous than over-the-counter medications or prescription sleep aids," Cuttler said. "Unlike long-acting sedatives and alcohol, cannabis was not associated with a 'hangover' effect, although individuals reported some lingering effects such as sleepiness and changes in mood."

The researchers also found that more than 60% of the study participants reported getting the recommended six to eight hours of sleep when using cannabis alone. Less than 20% of the sample reported getting six to eight hours of sleep while using a prescription or over-the-counter sleep aid—or cannabis combined with a sleep aid.

Additionally, only 33.8% of participants reported using cannabis edibles to help them sleep, and 14.1% opted for capsules containing THC. These alternatives are known for their longer-lasting effects but were less commonly chosen, possibly due to the need for quicker relief when falling asleep.

While most of the findings came out in favor of cannabis use for sleep, the study has its limitations. There was a strong selection bias for people who were already using cannabis because they perceived it to be beneficial, Cuttler cautioned. "Not everyone is going to find that cannabis helps with their sleep and future research needs to employ more objective sleep measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of cannabis for sleep," she said.

Nevertheless, Cuttler and Stueber hope that the study will provide some valuable insights for health care professionals who work with [cannabis users](#) and individuals seeking alternative solutions for sleep-related problems.

The research also supports the use of future clinical trials to validate the efficacy of myrcene and other isolated compounds in [cannabis](#) for sleep that don't have the intoxicating effects of THC.

More information: Amanda Stueber et al, A large-scale survey of cannabis use for sleep: preferred products and perceived effects in comparison to over-the-counter and prescription sleep aids, *Exploration of Medicine* (2023). [DOI: 10.37349/emed.2023.00171](https://doi.org/10.37349/emed.2023.00171)

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