

Research Involving Cannabis

Establishment of a Standard Delta-9-THC Unit to be Used in Research

Applications proposing research on cannabis or its main psychotropic constituent delta-9-THC are required to measure and report results using a standard delta-9-THC unit in all applicable human subjects' research. The goal is to increase the comparability across cannabis research studies. A standard unit is defined as 5 milligrams of delta-9-THC, regardless of the formulation of the cannabis plant material or extract. A justification should be provided for human research that does not propose to use the standard unit. Please see [NOT-DA-21-049](#) for additional details.

DEA Registrations for Research with Cannabis and Cannabis Products

Purchasing or handling cannabis and cannabis products with > 0.3% delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) by dry weight (i.e., "marijuana") without an appropriate Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) researcher registration is a violation of federal law and therefore a violation of the terms/conditions of an NIH research award.

Questions related to researcher registrations and the control status of the cannabis plant, its derivatives, or its components can be directed to the DEA Diversion Control Division, Drug & Chemical Evaluation Section. Information can be found on the DEA's Diversion Control Division website or questions can be emailed directly to their mailbox at DPE@dea.gov.

Sources of Cannabis and Cannabis Products for Research

The NIDA Drug Supply Program provides cannabis plant material and preparations containing various ratios of THC to cannabidiol. For information on available products and the requirements for obtaining cannabis products for research, visit the NIDA Drug Supply Program.

Cannabis and cannabis products may also be obtained from:

- Other [DEA-approved cannabis growers](#): Information can be found by contacting the growers directly or questions can be emailed directly to the DEA at DPE@dea.gov.
- Other countries with the proper authorizations: The DEA regulates the importation of controlled substances into the United States, and the [U.S. Food and Drug](#)

[Administration \(FDA\)](#) regulates the importation of investigational new drugs.

Researchers with questions about importing controlled substances should contact those agencies.

NIH research funds may not be used to analyze or provide research participants with cannabis products obtained from non-federally approved sources.

Sources of Hemp and Hemp-Derived Products for Research

Researchers may obtain cannabis products classified as hemp from the NIDA Drug Supply Program or other non-NIDA sources. NIH funds can be used to obtain hemp or hemp-derived products for research from state-authorized dispensaries.

NIDA recommends that hemp samples obtained from non-NIDA sources be analyzed to confirm that the samples do not contain greater than 0.3% delta-9 THC on a dry weight basis. NIDA further recommends that researchers confirm that the chosen analytical lab is a DEA registrant and approved for cannabis analysis by a recognized laboratory accreditation body.

FDA Investigational New Drug (IND) Approval for Interventional Studies Using Hemp or Hemp-Derived Products

If a hemp product fits the definition of a drug under the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 9) and its use fits the definition of an interventional investigation with humans, an IND for drugs containing hemp is likely to be required. Questions about INDs for particular protocols should be directed to the FDA.

For additional information about cannabis regulations and research materials, visit the NIH-funded [Resource Center for Cannabis & Cannabinoid Research \(R3CR\)](#).