



Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome

Cannabis hyperemesis syndrome (CHS) is a condition that can happen to people who use cannabis (marijuana) regularly, especially for a long time. As cannabis use has become more common, CHS is being seen more often in emergency rooms and clinics.

How common is CHS?

CHS is still considered uncommon, but its frequency is rising as more people use cannabis daily or almost daily. It is most often seen in people who have used cannabis for several years, with most cases occurring in young adults and more often in males.

What are the symptoms?

CHS causes repeated episodes of severe nausea and vomiting, often with abdominal pain. Many people find that taking hot showers or baths helps relieve their symptoms temporarily. The condition usually follows a pattern:

- Early phase: Nausea, especially in the morning, and abdominal discomfort.
- Vomiting phase: Severe, repeated vomiting, dehydration, and sometimes weight loss. Hot showers or baths may help for a short time.
- Recovery phase: Symptoms improve after stopping cannabis use.

How is CHS diagnosed?

There is no single test for CHS. Diagnosis is based on:

- A history of regular cannabis use (usually more than 1 year, and more than 4 times per week).
- Repeated episodes of vomiting (3 or more times per year).
- Relief of symptoms after stopping cannabis for at least 3 to 6 months.
- Excluding other causes of vomiting with a limited evaluation.

How is CHS treated?

The most important treatment is to **stop using cannabis**. This is the only way to prevent symptoms from coming back. During an episode, treatment may include:

- IV fluids to treat dehydration.
- Medicines such as benzodiazepines, haloperidol, or topical capsaicin cream for nausea and vomiting. Usual anti-nausea medicines (like ondansetron) often do not work well.
- Avoiding opioids, as they can make symptoms worse.
- Support and counseling to help with stopping cannabis use, as withdrawal and relapse are common.

What else should you know?

- CHS can lead to serious problems like dehydration, kidney injury, and electrolyte imbalances if not treated.
- Many people with CHS do not realize cannabis is causing their symptoms and may continue using it, thinking it helps.
- If you have repeated vomiting and use cannabis regularly, talk to your healthcare provider about CHS.

Quitting cannabis is the key to recovery and preventing future episodes.

References

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