CBD Products

We hear a lot about marijuana these days, especially as more states take steps to legalize it. However, there is a new product, Cannabidiol (CBD), that is gaining attention. Drive down any street and you will see signs advertising where you can find CBD. So, what is CBD?

CBD is one of the most prevalent active ingredients in cannabis, the marijuana plant, and hemp. The Farm Bill of 2018 legalized at the federal level the cultivation of hemp and the sale of products derived from hemp so long as they contain less than .3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Whether it is legal at the state level varies from state to state. CBD, which is derived from the hemp plant, does not cause psychoactive effects like THC but has been shown to have some positive effects on certain body systems. What many people don't realize is that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has only approved one CBD product to date. This product, the prescription drug Epidiolex, has been shown to be effective in treating two specific epilepsy disorders, Dravet syndrome and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome (LGS). As a result, there are many CBD products sold that are unregulated, meaning the level of THC in the product may be higher or lower than indicated on the packaging as there is no testing being done. There is also no guarantee that what you are purchasing contains any CBD at all, it could just be vegetable oil. In addition, claims of CBD's therapeutic benefit abound without any confirmation from the FDA.

CBD products are promoted for the treatment of anxiety, insomnia, and chronic pain as well as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, and diabetes. There are four different ways to ingest CBD. The first is orally. You can swallow drops of CBD oil directly or you can put it on or in your food or drinks. As with marijuana, there are also CBD-infused gummy bears and desserts. CBD taken orally takes longer to kick in as it has to travel through your digestive tract.

The second way to ingest CBD is sublingual or under the tongue. This allows for rapid onset because the CBD is absorbed into your body through your oral mucosa, moving quickly into your bloodstream and other cells. The third way is topical. Rather than entering the bloodstream, the CBD is absorbed through your body's largest organ, the skin. CBD products are used topically primarily to maintain skin health and lessen visible aging. The fourth way to use CBD is inhalation, using CBD as an E-Liquid or extract and using a vaping device. The CBD is inhaled into the lungs where it enters the blood stream, causing almost instant effects.

Although many tout the therapeutic effects of CBD, there are several potentially serious side effects associated with CBD use. These include liver damage, adverse interactions with other prescription drugs such as blood thinners, decreased fertility in males or male offspring of women who have been exposed, gastrointestinal distress, mood changes such as irritability and agitation, and decreased brain activity if coupled with alcohol or other drugs.

Due to the uncertainty as to the overall benefit versus risk of using CBD, additional research continues to be done to determine what daily CBD usage over prolonged periods of time does to the body. Given the

many unknowns associated with CBD usage, it is recommended that individuals talk with their health care provider before beginning usage of CBD.

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Bullying Prevention

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), bullying is a widespread problem for schools in the United States.   About 20% of students ages 12-18 experience bullying nationwide (The National Bullying Prevention Center). Despite the increase in cyberbullying over the last decade, the majority of bullying happens in person. School classrooms and hallways are two of the most prevalent locations in which bullying occurs. When it comes to cyberbullying, there is often an offline component of harm that occurs alongside the online harm (Cyberbullying Research Center). As such, most youth who are targeted on social media or within online environments, are also the ones being bullied at school.

While many young people can be unkind to each other, especially during adolescence, there is a clear line between being mean or experiencing conflict with peers and bullying. Bullying behavior is defined by three core elements:

- Intentional—unwanted, aggressive behavior intended to cause harm
- Repeated—the unwanted behavior is repeated multiple times or has the likelihood to be repeated many times
- Power imbalance—involves an imbalance of power between the target and perpetrator(s) based on a student's real or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, physical appearance, sex, or other distinguishing characteristics

Bullying has consistently been shown to produce negative outcomes in perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. As such, many experts consider bullying a public health concern. It is important to address the needs of all involved in bullying by being aware of the signs and symptoms of bullying, providing support for their mental and physical health, and teaching and reinforcing acceptable behaviors.

There are many warning signs that may indicate that someone is affected by bullying—either being bullied or bullying others. Recognizing the warning signs is an important first step in taking action against bullying.

Students who are being bullied may:

- Have unexplained cuts, bruises or scratches from fighting
- Have few, if any, friends
- Seem afraid of going to school, riding the bus, walking to/from school or participating in organized activities with peers
- Appear sad, moody, teary or depressed when he/she comes home
- Experience physical symptoms (trouble sleeping, changes in eating patterns, headaches/stomachaches)
- Appear anxious or have low-self-esteem
- Lose interest in doing school work or begin to do poorly in school

Students who bully others may:

- Have a positive attitude toward violence and the use of violent means
- Have a strong need to dominate (controlling rather than leading)

- Have little respect for authority
- Lack empathy toward students who are bullied
- Be impulsive, aggressive or easily angered
- Have difficulty following rules
- Be physically stronger than other children (common with boys who bully)
- Be perceived as popular (common with girls who bully)

Solutions to bullying are complex. Prevention and intervention initiatives that approach the issue from many angles show the most promise. Thus, efforts that support both victims and perpetrators as well as bystanders, are most successful at mitigating the negative effects of bullying. Schools, parents and the community can play a collaborative role. Promising strategies in bullying prevention and intervention include:

- Communicate policy and protocols for bullying behaviors to all staff, students and parents.
- Do not label a student as a "bully". Bullying is a behavior not an identity and labeling a student can limit their ability to change the behavior.
- Strategies that focus on holding students accountable for their behavior but also empowers them to change that behavior are more effective than punitive punishments and peer mediation in bullying situations.
- Empower students to be upstanders by teaching bystander intervention skills- when bystanders to bullying intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds 57% of the time.
- Provide a means for safely reporting bullying behaviors and encourage youth to report incidences.
- Implement programs that emphasize prevention and early identification of students with behavioral concerns and provide social and emotional skills instruction.
- Create a safe and supportive school environment- a positive school climate is associated with less involvement in bullying, reduced peer rejection and increase academic achievement.
- Allow youth to be involved in bullying prevention efforts
- Model and teach respectful behavior systematically
- Teach responsible use of technology
- Build confidence in youth- encourage kids to spend time with friends who have a positive influence. Participation in clubs, sports or other organized activities can help build strengthen and build friendships.

References: Cyberbullying Research Center; National Association of School Psychologist; National Bullying Prevention Center; National Center for Educational Statistics; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; Stopbullying.gov

Our Ever-Changing & Evolving Digital World: What Social Media & Apps Kids Are Using

Kids still faithfully use YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram apps and parents have become familiar and comfortable with these apps but these are not the only trending apps kids use. There are literally dozens of social media platforms and apps that kids use on a regular basis.

Below are just a few of the newer trending apps kids are also using and/or flocking to online.

Zoomerang: Zoomerang is one of the most popular apps right now among teens and tweens. It is a simple step by step tutorial video maker that allows you to take and develop short videos, apply filters and even add special effects as well as background music to your video. You can then share the videos on social media sites. Zoomerang has shown to be very helpful in creating videos for Instagram and Tik Tok where many teens can be found. And because of Zoomerang's easy to use tutorials that help make video creating and editing simple, even elementary age kids with access to a smart phone or other mobile device can create videos.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: One of the features of the app that is cause for concern is location tracking. This particular feature makes it easy for online predators to locate and find kids from the videos they have posted.

Furthermore, it is simple for anyone to take a screenshot of parts of a video and then photoshop and/or manipulate the screenshot and use it out of its original context. Cyberbullying and harassment have occurred often using this this approach.

Among Us: Among Us is one of the more popular online multiple player social deduction/elimination games. It has a space-themed setting and there are two kinds of roles. The goal is to try and figure out who are the imposters in the game. Four to ten players are needed to start a game. You are able to play with friends or strangers online. Among Us is just one of literally dozens of online themed deduction games.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: Parents should understand that their kids could be playing this multiplayer game unknowingly with unsafe strangers. A game hacker in 2020 used the messaging feature in the game to promote his YouTube channel and server which were filled with racist language, gore, pornography, and extremist political views. The hacker also sent disturbing messages to players during the game.

Bigo: Bigo is a live streaming app. The app is rated for persons that are age 17 and up. This app is used to vlog (vlog is a personal website or social media account where a person regularly posts short videos about their life, live streams video game play, and hosts their own shows).

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: There is no true age verification so anyone can access and use the live streaming app. Furthermore, parents should be aware that users have to provide personal information such as their age and location. This app has frequently been reported to contain bullying behavior, inappropriate sexual comments, nudity, violence, and lewd and offensive language

Tellonym: Tellonym is an anonymous messaging app. It refers to itself as "the most honest place on the internet." This particular app is popular among middle schoolers.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: Like some other popular apps, cyberbullying tends to occur, as well as rumors, threats of violence, and sexual content.

Houseparty: Houseparty is a video chatting app. It allows family and friends to communicate with each other through live video and texts in chat groups. It became very popular over the last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic as it allowed kids to stay in touch with friends and family and hang out while still practicing social distancing.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: The video app is live, so there's nothing to keep kids from viewing/hearing inappropriate content. Users can record and send chats and even take screenshots.

It should be noted that social media platforms and apps that are geared towards social interaction can be quite useful in keeping kids and families connected. However, we also need to recognize that most any app can be utilized for inappropriate and/or harmful intentions. As a result, we must continue to talk with our kids about appropriate and proper use of social media and online apps to help lessen the risks associated with using these social media sites and apps.

With that in mind, here are some tips for parents in navigating the world of apps:

Tips for Parents:

- Know what your apps your kids are using and what's the purpose of each app.
- Know how each app works. If you do not know how an app works, download it and learn how to use it.
- Have conversations about trending apps. New and old apps are always updating and changing so one of the best ways to stay current is to ask your kids what are the newest apps kids in school are using.
- Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behavior and posts online. Help them understand the consequences of their actions online.
- Help youth think about the consequences of their actions by talking about online challenges and risky behaviors. Ask them whether they think the challenge is safe or dangerous.
- Ask questions about if they have had any concerning issues while on any of the sites or apps they use, such as inappropriate sexual posts, cyberbullying, contact from strangers etc.

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