



## **Health Advisory: Marijuana and Obstructive Sleep Apnea**

Marijuana is a drug derived from the cannabis plant. The flower from the cannabis plant has nearly 100 unique active compounds. Each of these compounds can have a different effect on the brain and body. Synthetic versions of some of these compounds have been developed for medical research. Limited research on animals and small groups of people has shown that one of these synthetic compounds can moderately improve breathing in people who have obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). However, available data suggest that this synthetic marijuana compound is much less effective than positive airway pressure (PAP) therapy, the standard treatment for OSA.

Some states have legalized marijuana for recreational or medical use, and at least one state now permits medical marijuana for OSA. However, no form of marijuana has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of OSA. There also have been no long-term studies of marijuana in people who have OSA. Using marijuana to treat OSA can have adverse effects, such as daytime sleepiness. This side effect is a safety concern because many people who have OSA experience excessive daytime sleepiness, which can increase the risk of drowsy driving crashes and workplace accidents.

Neither marijuana nor synthetic medical cannabis should be used for the treatment of OSA until there is sufficient scientific evidence of safety and efficacy. People who have OSA should discuss their treatment options with a licensed medical provider at an accredited sleep facility.

*Adopted by the AASM Board of Directors: Jan. 20, 2018*

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) is a professional membership society that improves sleep health and promotes high quality, patient-centered care through advocacy, education, strategic research, and practice standards ([aasm.org](http://aasm.org)).

A searchable directory of AASM-accredited member sleep centers is available at [sleepeducation.org](http://sleepeducation.org).