

Delta-8 – What’s That?

Delta-8 is a new variant of marijuana derived from Delta-9, which is the most common form of THC. Delta-9 is the compound found in marijuana that causes psychoactive symptoms, such as hallucinations, disconnected thoughts, panic responses, changes in perception, and delusions, among other psychological side effects. While Delta-8 is a form of THC, it provides what people describe as a “mild high.” Many people refer to Delta-8 as “marijuana lite” or “diet weed,” due to the high it gives being so much milder than that of Delta-9. It is believed that it can cause similar psychoactive symptoms experienced with Delta-9, such as paranoia, anxiety, and drowsiness, but in a milder and less intoxicating form. Ultimately, Delta-8 and Delta-9, while supposedly having different types of highs, are very similar in chemical structure.

Delta-8 is a natural chemical compound found in very small traces throughout hemp and cannabis plants. It is thought to be legal because it comes from the hemp plant and has a THC level below 0.3%. What many people do not realize is that Delta-8 falls into a legal gray area because it comes from the hemp plant, which the Federal Farm Bill from 2018 would classify as legal and is not considered a controlled substance because the hemp portion of the plant is removed. Delta-8, however, is not specifically mentioned anywhere in the Farm Bill or Agriculture and Nutrition Improvement Act of 2018, thus creating a loophole that Delta-8 is legal and does not require any age restrictions.

With this substance flying somewhat under the radar and not being tested or monitored, many chemists and scientists are concerned about the safety of Delta-8. As some people know, substances that are not FDA-approved and are not monitored or tested, have not been checked for impurities of the substance. This is why some sellers get away with selling what they are labeling as “CBD oil,” when in reality, it is really expired olive oil. The same possibilities arise with Delta-8. Unfortunately, what people are finding is that there is misleading information being advertised with the product, i.e., instead of there being less than 0.3% of THC, it actually contains very high levels of THC. Due to these inconsistencies, many states are banning the substance.

Governor Pete Ricketts of Nebraska has asked the Nebraska State Attorney General to “reconsider” the legalities and look further into the substance. Even the Drug Enforcement Administration, which is a federal level law enforcement agency, is researching if there need to be changes made to the Farm Bill in order to better regulate or eliminate this drug’s availability due to all the unknowns surrounding Delta-8.

So, why do people use Delta-8 if it does not cause as much of a high? There is a lack of research on Delta-8 due to the gray area surrounding its legality. Little to no evidence or research has been done to determine what effects Delta-8 has on people’s overall health, especially when used long term. Reports about the variant, which are found mostly online, suggest that people often use Delta-8 along with other medications, such as a supplement to medications for depression. Reports state that people are finding that Delta-8 causes them to be less nauseous, helps boost appetites, helps with pain management, and helps with overall mental health. It is also reported that it prevents people from vomiting when receiving treatments like chemotherapy for cancer. Some adverse effects of using the substance that people have reported include

confusion, anxiety, fatigue, slower heart rate, feeling numbness throughout the body, faster heart rate, and even low blood pressure.

Overall, there is very little known about Delta-8, and what we do know is not the most promising, especially with long term use. The lack of research to date to prove that it is not any less or more dangerous than Delta-9 creates concern regarding the unknown risks to which adults and youth are exposing themselves when using the substance. This drug, despite the questions regarding its legality, should be approached cautiously until there is more known about the substance and its overall effects. Regardless of legality and side effects, it should still be considered a danger to youth as it can only be assumed at this time there would be similar negative effects on the developing brain as occur with Delta-9.

References

Ricketts asks state attorney general to review legality of Delta-8 THC

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‘It’s absolutely everywhere’: Delta 8, a cousin of marijuana, a hot seller in Nebraska

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