

Michael J. Fox:

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Intro:

You're listening to audio from one of our Ask the MD videos. In this series, a movement disorder specialist at The Michael J. Fox Foundation addresses common questions about living with Parkinson's disease. Learn more about the Ask the MD series on [michaeljfox.org](http://michaeljfox.org). Thanks for listening.

Dr. Rachel Dolhun:

I'm Dr. Rachel Dolhun, a movement disorder specialist and vice president of Medical Communications at The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Today I'll be talking about medical marijuana and Parkinson's.

One of the most common questions we get is what about medical marijuana for Parkinson's? Even though the FDA hasn't yet approved medical marijuana, several states have legalized its use and many people wonder if it could help their Parkinson's symptoms. Marijuana contains about a hundred different chemicals called cannabinoids. The two main ones are THC and CBD. THC causes the high associated with marijuana and can affect thinking, mood and behavior. CBD doesn't have these effects. Several small trials have looked at whether marijuana and cannabinoids could help Parkinson's motor symptoms such as tremor, slowness and stiffness, and non-motor symptoms, such as sleep changes, mood problems or hallucinations which are seeing things that aren't there. Trials have also looked at the effect on dyskinesia which are involuntary uncontrolled movements that can occur with long-term use of levodopa.

The results of all these trials are mixed. Some show benefit and others don't. The difficulty with marijuana and cannabinoid research in Parkinson's is that trials often involve small numbers of participants and they typically lack a placebo group. They also don't compare to currently available Parkinson's treatments, and they don't use standardized doses or preparations of marijuana or cannabinoids, which makes it difficult to compare the results across trials.

The bottom line is that marijuana and cannabinoids may be potential therapies for Parkinson's, but more work is necessary to evaluate their safety and efficacy. If you're considering marijuana or cannabinoids, talk to your doctor about the potential benefits and risks as well as possible drug interactions. Potential side effects could include changes in mood, behavior,

memory, or thinking. You can find more information about medical marijuana and Parkinson's by visiting our website.

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