

Marijuana: The allergen you never knew existed

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Growing up, you may have been given reasons for not smoking marijuana. What you may not have heard is that marijuana, like other pollen-bearing plants, is an allergen which can cause allergic responses.

A new article published in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, the scientific publication of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), summarizes research on the ways in which cannabis can act as an allergen. The article draws attention to allergic responses that may be unfamiliar to marijuana users. Included in the article is information on case reports regarding episodes of allergic reactions, hypersensitivity and even anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) to cannabis in its various forms. Among other things, cannabis pollen or cannabis smoke exposure has resulted in symptoms of [allergic rhinitis](#) (hay fever) conjunctivitis and asthma. Allergic asthma triggered by seasonal and occupational exposure to cannabis has also been reported.

The authors of the article point out that cannabis' legal status may create barriers for accurate and clear patient reporting, and that legal limitations may pose diagnostic challenges. As with other allergens, the authors say that avoidance is recommended. Marijuana's legal status in the United States is changing, making information about cannabis allergy timely and noteworthy. Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia currently have laws legalizing marijuana in some form, and four states have legalized [marijuana](#) for recreational use.

More information: Cannabis Sativa: The Unconventional "Weed" Allergen, *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, 2015.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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