

Using cannabis for pain management after spinal cord injury:

A qualitative study



Cannabis was used to reduce pain often as a **'last resort'** when other pain management strategies were ineffective. It was also used as an alternative to prescribed medications since participants felt they often led to negative side-effects such as drowsiness, fatigue, or being in a 'zombie state'.



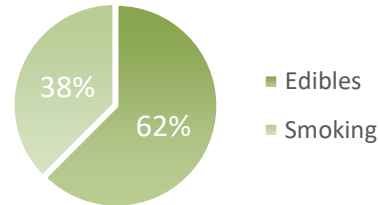
The (prescribed) drugs don't work.

"All of the prescription medications...things like oxycodone, fentanyl patch...I find they make me drowsy and they do impair my cognitive ability to think clearly and...to be fully compos mentis."



A summary of the interview information

We talked to 8 people with SCI about their experiences of using cannabis for pain. There were 6 men and 2 women interviewed.



Participants reported cannabis reduced their pain quickly and allowed them to engage in daily activities without the side effects of traditional pain medication.

Choosing to use cannabis



I'm not wanting to get stoned all day - every day, because that's not me. But I get to live every day. There's a big difference.

(Participant 3)



People feel able to pursue activities and roles that are meaningful for them.

"It's helped my whole health and helped the pain - everything, my mental pain, physical pain, the whole lot you know, ever since I've been on it."



You can't always get what you want.

Participants described unpredictability, inconsistency, and lack of information due to the unregulated market.

Participants found few health care professionals who were able to support or advise people about cannabis use, so they relied on their own research to determine the dosage and chemical make-up of cannabis to use for their pain relief.