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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

MARIJUANA COULD REDUCE DRUG AND ALCOHOL RELAPSES FOR ADDICTS

Marijuana is now legal for medical use in 29 states, and it's no longer a secret that the drug has medicinal benefits. It's been shown to drastically reduce the number of seizures in children, diminish the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, and relieve nausea in cancer patients.
Many of the drug's benefits derive from cannabidiol (CBD), one of its more than 100 active components. Unlike tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the chemical that causes a high, cannabidiol does not have psychoactive effects — meaning that an individual can experience the medical benefits without having to experience the high.

CBD's psychological and neurological benefits, like the ones mentioned above, have been known for some time. But this month, scientists may have found another, potentially groundbreaking advantage of the drug: a means of curb relapse rates in those suffering from addiction.
The findings appeared in a study published in the journal Neuropsychopharmacology that was conducted by a group of scientists at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif. To perform the preclinical trial, the scientists subjected rats to a daily intake of alcohol or cocaine that resulted in addictive behavior.

Once the animals showed signs of addiction, the researchers began to apply a gel containing cannabidiol onto the rats' skin, once a day for a week. The addicted rats treated with CBD not only demonstrated less anxiety, but also fewer relapses when confronted with situations found to trigger the addictive behavior as they recovered from addiction to either alcohol or cocaine,. The researchers concluded that the treatment "effectively reduced relapse provoked by stress and drug cues" as well as "reduced anxiety and impulsivity."

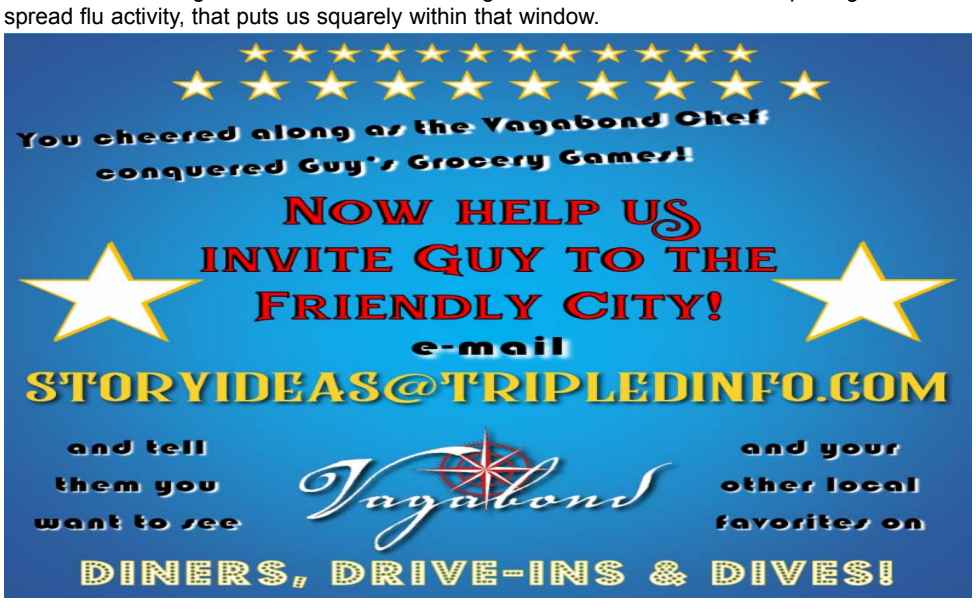
Friedbert Weiss, PhD, the lead author of the study and a professor in Scripps' department of neuroscience, tells Yahoo Lifestyle that the outcome the team has observed is promising. "The results provide proof of principle supporting the potential of CBD in relapse prevention along two dimensions: beneficial actions across several vulnerability states, and long-lasting effects with only brief treatment."
The length of time that the effects seem to last was particularly heartening. Although the CBD treatment was ended after seven days, the rats showed reduced relapse rates for five full months afterward — an outcome the researchers called "quite unexpected." If it can be shown to produce a similar effect in human trials, it could offer major benefits for the millions of people currently addicted to drugs in the United States.

Based on the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 21 million Americans of age 12 and older have a substance use disorder, three out of four of them related to alcohol. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, relapse rates as these people struggle to beat their addiction are somewhere between 40 and 60 percent. Stress, which CBD was shown to reduce, is one of the main triggers.

The new findings could prove life-changing both for the millions of people struggling with drug addiction as well as the 46 percent of Americans who have a friend or family member coping with addiction.

A SECOND WAVE OF FLU MAY BE ON THE WAY, CDC WARNS

Flu season may have peaked in February, but we're not out of the woods yet.
The bulk of this year's deadly flu season was dominated by the H3N2 virus, an influenza A strain that is more severe and less receptive to vaccines than other types of the disease. As the season winds down, however, influenza B has overtaken influenza A, setting the scene for a possible second wave of flu, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data.
While flu activity nationwide has dropped to just above non-flu-season levels, influenza B viruses were reported more frequently than influenza A viruses during the week ending March 17, according to the CDC. Influenza B infections, which commonly strike later in the season, may be especially severe for young children, a CDC spokesperson told CNN.
Even those who already got the flu this year may not be safe, since it's possible to get sick with both influenza A and influenza B in a single season.
The good news, however, is that influenza B viruses traditionally respond better to vaccines than influenza A viruses. By CDC estimates, this year's flu shot was 42% effective against influenza B, versus 25% effective against H3N2.
And believe it or not, it's still not too late to get a shot if you haven't. The CDC recommends vaccination "as long as flu viruses are circulating" — and with 17 states still reporting widespread flu activity, that puts us squarely within that window.



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