

# Dietary Preferences and Weight Control Behaviors Among Cannabis Consumers versus Non-Consumers: Preliminary Results of the Herbal Heart Study

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## BACKGROUND

- With the growing popularity of cannabis, it is important to be mindful of the effects it has on the human body
- Dietary preferences, fasting, and exercise practices all play a crucial role in shaping the health of an individual
- While existing literature reports the impact of cannabis on such health aspects, the prevalence and nature of these behaviors between users and non-users remains poorly understood

## OBJECTIVE

- Investigate the association between cannabis use and lifestyle choices, particularly dietary preferences and weight control behaviors
- Examine the prevalence of fasting and exercise practices among users compared to non-users, to understand potential implications for cardiovascular health

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- Data sourced from cannabis consumers participating in the ongoing Herbal Heart Study Cohort
- Research focused on investigating the impact of cannabinoids and cannabis delivery methods on subclinical cardiovascular risk
- Target demographic: young adults aged 18-35 residing in South Florida
- Descriptive statistics and Chi-squared/Fisher's exact test where appropriate were employed using SAS Analytics

## MEASURES

- Self-reported dietary preferences:** Participants indicated their dietary habits, including whether they were omnivores, vegetarians, pescatarians, vegans, or had other dietary restrictions
- Weight control behaviors:** Participants reported any fasting or refraining from eating for weight or shape control in the past three months
- Exercise practices:** Participants disclosed whether they engaged in "driven" or "compulsive" exercise for weight/shape control or to burn fat or calories in the same period

## RESULTS

- A sample of 150 participants (mean age: 24.6 years, SD: 4.5), 66.7% were female
- Dietary preferences:**
  - Omnivores (78%), vegetarians (6.7%), pescatarian (4.7%), vegan (2.7%), and other (8%)
- Cannabis usage:**
  - Omnivores (47%), vegetarians (40%), pescatarians (42.9%)
  - 26.7% of users compared to 5.4% of non-users reported fasting/refraining from eating for weight in the past 3 months
- Exercise practices:**
  - 20% of cannabis users compared to 5.4% of non-users engaged in "driven" or "compulsive" exercise

## DISCUSSION

- Dietary preferences showed no significant differences between cannabis users and non-users ( $p=0.892$ )
- Highlighting a substantial discrepancy, more cannabis users reported fasting for weight or shape control, potentially impacting cardiovascular health
- With a significantly higher prevalence among cannabis users, "driven" or "compulsive" exercise may exacerbate cardiovascular risk factors

## CONCLUSION

- This study highlights the intricate relationship between cannabis use and lifestyle behaviors among young adults, particularly in the context of dietary preferences, weight control practices, and exercise habits
- In regards to behavioral patterns, the findings highlight a concerning trend of increased fasting and "driven" or "compulsive" exercise among cannabis users, suggesting potential implications for cardiovascular health
- Further investigation is warranted to elucidate the underlying mechanisms driving these associations and to explore longitudinal effects in larger and more diverse populations
- Healthcare professionals should be mindful of screening for cannabis use and associated behaviors in young adults, and tailored interventions aimed at promoting healthy lifestyle choices may be crucial for mitigating cardiovascular risks in this demographic

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Dietary Preferences Between Users and Non-Users

