# Cannabidiol shows promise in treating autism spectrum disorder in young people



Research presented at the European Congress of Psychiatry in Madrid has indicated that cannabidiol (CBD), a cannabis extract, may offer meaningful benefits for children and teenagers diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The findings suggest that CBD could potentially improve behaviour and reduce symptoms associated with ASD, which affects approximately one in every 100 young people worldwide.

The study involved a meta-analysis of three previous trials, encompassing a total of 276 participants with an average age of 10.5 years. These trials assessed the efficacy and safety of CBD in addressing the challenges faced by those with ASD. Results revealed "moderate improvements" in social responsiveness, alongside "small yet notable" reductions in both disruptive behaviours and anxiety. Additionally, participants exhibited enhanced sleep quality while using CBD cannabis extract.

Lead investigator Lara Cappelletti Beneti Branco from the University of São Paulo stated, “The global population prevalence of ASD diagnosis amongst children and adolescents is growing, but many treatment pathways are not effective." Branco acknowledged the promising nature of the outcomes observed but stressed the need for further research, stating, "However, there still needs to be considerable focus on further research with larger trials to clarify its efficacy and safety in managing ASD.”

The safety profile of CBD cannabis extract was also noted in the study, indicating that the incidence of adverse events was not significantly different when compared to a placebo group. Professor Geert Dom, President of the European Psychiatric Association (EPA), commented on the implications of the findings, emphasising the frustration encountered by families and healthcare professionals due to the limited effective treatment options available for managing ASD symptoms. He said, “ASD can be extremely frustrating for all involved; parents of children and adolescents with the disorder, the treating clinicians and of course the children and adolescents themselves.”

Professor Dom expressed optimism regarding the study results and the potential for further research: "It is with delight that we see the results of this meta-analysis and we hope to see further research into this so we can move towards a solution to the unmet need within this community.”

The exploration of CBD as a treatment avenue reflects a growing interest in alternative therapies for ASD, aligning with ongoing discussions within the medical community regarding the efficacy of non-traditional treatment methods.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2025/04/08/brazil-CBD-cannabidiol-children-autism-study/1461744127954/> - This article discusses research presented at the European Congress of Psychiatry indicating CBD's potential benefits for autistic children, including improved social responsiveness and reduced anxiety.
* <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1079031> - The study mentioned here corroborates the findings of improvements in social responsiveness and reductions in disruptive behaviors and anxiety among ASD patients using CBD.
* <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2025-04-cannabidiol-therapy-symptoms-autistic-children.html> - The article explains the meta-analysis conducted on randomized controlled trials showing CBD's benefits for children with ASD, including enhanced social responsiveness and sleep quality.
* <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders> - This World Health Organization fact sheet supports the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder, affecting approximately one in 100 young people worldwide.
* <https://epa-congress.org/> - The European Congress of Psychiatry, where the research was presented, is a significant event in psychiatry, hosting discussions on various mental health topics, including ASD treatment options.