

If you're new to hemp-derived CBD—whether as a flower, oil, non-combustible, edible, tincture or cream—given how far it's come in a relatively short period of time, it may seem like CBD is the greatest thing since sliced bread.

In truth, Cannabis Sativa L., a.k.a. Hemp, is neither new nor a fad that, when forgotten, will take its rightful place next to Tickle Me Elmo, slap bracelets and the hybrid roller skate and sneaker. While the consumption of hemp dates back a few thousand years, all that's changed between then and now is the [technology](#) that allows consumers to get the most out of their experience.

## What Did China's Ancient Emperors Know That Modern-Day Researchers Have Only Recently Discovered?

Along with bamboo, hemp is one of the most versatile plants in nature, with its earliest known roots dating back to 10,000 B.C. According to research conducted by [Ernest Abel, PhD](#) (professor emeritus of Wayne State University), China's dynasties began using hemp for a variety of needs starting in 10,000 B.C., among them: rope, burial cloths, clothing, the strings used in bows and arrows, and even paper.

What Dr. Abel discovered while doing research for his book, ["Marihuana: The First Twelve Thousand Years,"](#) was that the first documented use of hemp for medicinal purposes dates back to 2700 B.C., when Emperor Shen-Nung, considered the Father of Chinese Medicine, used it to heal the aches and pains of his subjects (those who were subservient to him in his dynasty).

Absent Big Pharma's labs to create synthetic analgesics (acetaminophen), anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen) and antibiotics, in those days, nature did her best at providing the relief people needed. Some of hemp's earliest known uses were to relieve gout, general pain, constipation, [rheumatism](#), malaria, beriberi (a condition caused by Vitamin B-1 deficiency), and pain from menstruation.

In 207 A.D., Chinese physician Hua Tuo (sometimes spelled T'o) used a concoction combining hemp and many herbs to create an anesthetic for his surgical patients. With the discovery of this crude anesthetic, Hua Tuo was able to perform [laparotomies, remove diseased tissue, and even perform a splenectomy.](#)

## Other Uses for Cannabis and Hemp Throughout History

Although China is widely regarded as the oldest civilization to use hemp for medicinal, practical, and everyday uses, there are documented cases of other peoples using hemp throughout history.

In 1300 B.C., using the silk and spice trade route (7,000 miles of roads between China and the Middle East), traders sold hemp for a variety of uses: malaria, fever, asthma and dysentery.

Ancient Egyptians used hemp and cannabis to treat glaucoma, depression, cataracts, hemorrhoids, pain, inflammation and cancer. Additionally, archeologists discovered that [Pharaoh Ramesses II was mummified with cannabis.](#)

Between the [11th and 15th centuries](#), [cannabis](#) was widely used to reduce epileptic seizures. Arabic scholars al-Mayusi and al-Badri are often credited for its discovery for this indication.

The Spanish brought cannabis and hemp to the Americas, where it was used in textiles, in particular for clothing and rope.

During an expedition to Egypt in the late 1780s and 1790s, with the intention of undermining Britain's control, Napoléon Bonaparte discovered the pain-relieving benefits of cannabis. [Napoléon returned to France with this "new wonder drug."](#) It would later be discovered to be effective at relieving coughs and jaundice.

## Cannabis and CBD Use in 19th Century

One is the amount (.03 percent or less for Hemp) of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is what causes the psychoactive effect when consumed (commonly described as the high). The other is the result of the first difference. While [cannabis and hemp are the same plant](#), the presence of THC in [marijuana](#) makes the plant and all its extracts either highly regulated or criminalized (depending on the state or country), while the absence of THC in hemp is why [CBD is an estimated \\$9.3 billion industry](#).

Dr. William O'Shaughnessy (1808 - 1889) of Limerick, Ireland, was a physician, researcher, pharmacologist and pathologist who made some remarkable discoveries about cannabis in the mid-1800s. In 1833, three years after Dr. O'Shaughnessy graduated from medical school (at the age of 21), he was recruited away from the forensic toxicology lab he owned and had founded to take a job with the [East India Company to work as an assistant surgeon](#). (India was under British rule during that time until 1947, so it was common for Britain's most skilled and educated men to relocate.)

Following a thorough examination of the history of the medicinal benefits of cannabis as documented by Ayurvedic and Persian physicians in both India and the Middle East, Dr. O'Shaughnessy was moved to do his own research. First tested on rodents, dogs and cats, once Dr. O'Shaughnessy concluded the plant was safe, he added human subjects to his clinical trials.

## First Cannabis Clinical Trial

Dr. O'Shaughnessy's trials revealed several important outcomes:

- Patients suffering the effects of hydrophobia (an extreme fear of water, a common symptom of rabies) saw improvement (Louis Pasteur's vaccine for rabies wouldn't be developed for another 45 years)
- The pain, inflammation and debilitating effects of rheumatism were dramatically decreased
- While cannabis can't treat cholera, the diarrhea that leads to dehydration abated, allowing the body to heal and treatment to be effective
- It reduced the frequency and severity of epileptic seizures

In addition to these critical findings, many of which [modern researchers are only recently realizing](#), cannabis and hemp cultivators credit Dr. Shaughnessy with determining the differences between [female and male cannabis/hemp plants](#).

## How Petroleum and Nylon Crushed Hemp Cultivation

Between 1600 and 1890, hemp production in the U.S. was going strong to make many textiles. In fact, in 1619, the Virginia Assembly required every farmer to grow hemp—to meet growing demand. By the 19th century, many medicinal products sold in pharmacies throughout the U.S. contained cannabis.

With the influx of Mexican refugees at the start of the Mexican Revolution (1910 to 1924) into the U.S., attitudes about cannabis began shifting. Suddenly this widely touted, practical and medical plant was for the first time being seen as dangerous because marijuana now had a different face.

By the time the movie, “[Reefer Madness](#)” was released in theaters in 1936, Americans had already begun viewing the once-revered plant with skepticism—the result of propaganda about this “evil weed” from Mexico. This skepticism made things all too easy for Congress to pass the Marijuana Tax Act in 1937, which added a \$2 tax to every ounce of cannabis/hemp sold, effectively prohibiting its growth and use. (\$2 is the equivalent of \$36.71 today. When end users can purchase an ounce of hemp flower on the Internet for as little as \$50 an ounce—depending on the strain—paying an additional \$36 for taxes is exorbitant.)

With the tax already in place, also in 1937, DuPont was awarded the patent for Nylon, effectively crushing the hemp industry overnight. Nylon is made by combining plastic and [polymers](#), requiring the use [petroleum](#) and very high temperatures to heat and bind the materials.

In 1971, then President Richard Nixon declared the War on Drugs, adding the [cannabis plant to the Schedule 1 list](#), joining actual dangerous drugs like heroin. No distinction was made between hemp and cannabis, as both were considered controlled substances.

## The More Things Change, The More They Stay the Same

In 1980, an Israeli researcher, Raphael Mechoulam, made some important (modern-day) discoveries about the still-illicit hemp plant: the cannabinoid CBD was safe and efficacious at reducing [seizures associated with epilepsy](#). Twenty-eight years later, the FDA approved Epidiolex, the first cannabis-based, small biologic drug, to treat Lennox-Gastaut syndrome and Dravet syndrome—both of which cause frequent seizures.

In 1988, researchers discovered cannabinoid [CB1 and CB2 receptors](#). CB1 receptors are among the most common found in the nervous system and are required for healthy brain function. They help, at least in part, in regulating mood and anxiety. CB2 receptors reduce inflammation and control the body’s immune response to microorganisms such as viruses and bacteria.

Despite major opposition from the Clinton administration, former presidents George Bush, Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter, as well as Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole—calling cannabis anything from a cynical hoax and a threat to the public health of all Americans—in [1996, California passed Prop 215](#), legalizing cannabis use for patients struggling with symptoms resulting from AIDS, cancer and glaucoma.

Maine followed in 1999 and Nevada in 2000. Between 2000 and present day, states and U.S. territories began legalizing cannabis and CBD for medicinal or recreational use or both. Some states legalized CBD while restricting or banning the use of plants and extracts that contain more than .03 percent THC.

In 2011, The National Institutes of Health (NIH) published their findings on a study that looked at [CBD's effect on anxiety](#). By 2016, the Deputy Director of the National Center of Complementary and Integrative Health announced that NIH would begin funding several studies that would look at [CBD as a viable treatment for myriad indications](#), including: multiple sclerosis, post-traumatic stress disorder/illness, dementia and [Alzheimer's](#), [migraines](#), [cancer](#), and more.

In 2013, cannabis got a surprising endorsement from CNN medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta. Toward the end of the first quarter 2014, Dr. Gupta “doubled down” on his position that cannabis and CBD are safe and efficacious. And he didn’t take the conservative approach by presenting both sides. He was clear that both [THC and CBD provide myriad medicinal benefits](#).

In 2014, [NIH concluded that](#), “at this time, there does seem to be a growing body of basic pharmacologic data suggesting there may be a role for CBD, especially in the treatment of refractory epilepsy.”

That same year, CBD oil producers began popping up, accounting for \$548 million in sales. With the expansion of the Farm Bill in 2018 to include hemp cultivation nationwide, as well as CBD oils and other extracts, by 2019 the [CBD industry swelled to \\$7.1 billion](#) (in the U.S. alone). A [Gallup poll from 2019 revealed that CBD consumers](#) use it for many of the same reasons people have throughout history, along with newly discovered ones.

## Choosing the Best CBD Products for You

If you’re interested in using CBD products to improve your health, given the size of the industry, it can be confusing to know which company should earn your business. It’s unclear how many companies in the U.S. make CBD extracts. It could be hundreds; it could be thousands. What is known is that not all of them are reputable, and many, if not most, source [hemp that is sprayed with pesticides](#) and herbicides (like RoundUp) and is grown with the use of chemical fertilizer.

On top of that, several have been exposed for using [synthetic CBD](#) like K2 and Spice—which carry many known health risks, including death. There’s only one way to ensure the CBD products you purchase are safe from harmful chemicals: If you don’t see that the CBD company you’re interested in buying from [provides third-party testing](#), run! It means the company won’t disclose what’s in the hemp they source and whether it is indeed hemp or not.

With so many CBD products on the market, many consumers are seeking out companies that provide both high-quality CBD and innovation. CBD oil is known for its bitter taste, so many companies use natural and artificial ingredients to mask the flavor.

[The Elon combines full-spectrum hemp-blends](#) (of CBD and other cannabinoids), heating to an ideal temperature with zero taste. The Elon is non-combustible, and with no buttons to try and figure out, so the temperature is perfect every time. And the best part is its lightweight and sleek design—discreet enough to use in public.

This was originally published on the [Elon website](#) and is republished with permission.