

# Cannabis withdrawal symptoms might have clinical importance

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Cannabis users have a greater chance of relapse to cannabis use when they experience certain withdrawal symptoms, according to research published Sep. 26 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* led by David Allsop of the National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC) at the University of New South Wales.

The authors tested a group of dependent [cannabis users](#) over a two week period of abstinence for impairment related to their withdrawal symptoms. Findings were correlated with the probability of relapse to cannabis use during the abstinence period, and the level of use one month later.

They found that in more dependent users, certain withdrawal symptoms, such as physical tension, [sleep problems](#), anxiety, depression, mood swings and loss of appetite, were more strongly associated with relapse than other symptoms, such as hot flashes, fatigue, or night sweats. Participants with greater dependence before the abstinence attempt reported more severe impairment from the withdrawal. Participants with greater impairment from cannabis withdrawal consumed more cannabis during the month following the abstinence attempt.

If these results extend to treatment seeking cannabis users seeking treatment for withdrawal, the research may help improve counseling and treatment strategies for those looking for support.

"Tailoring treatments to target withdrawal symptoms contributing to

functional impairment during a quit attempt may improve treatment outcomes" says Allsop.

**More information:** Allsop DJ, Copeland J, Norberg MM, Fu S, Molnar A, et al. (2012) Quantifying the Clinical Significance of Cannabis Withdrawal. PLOS ONE 7(9): e44864.  
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