

Chronic cannabis use raises the risk of major depression, bipolar disorder and psychosis by up to **FOUR TIMES**, major study suggests

- Chronic cannabis use increases psychotic bipolar risk by 4.1 times
- It also doubles the risk of psychotic depression, a study in Denmark has found
- [READ MORE: Marijuana may be behind 30% of schizophrenia cases in men](#)

By [CAITLIN TILLEY, HEALTH REPORTER FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](#)

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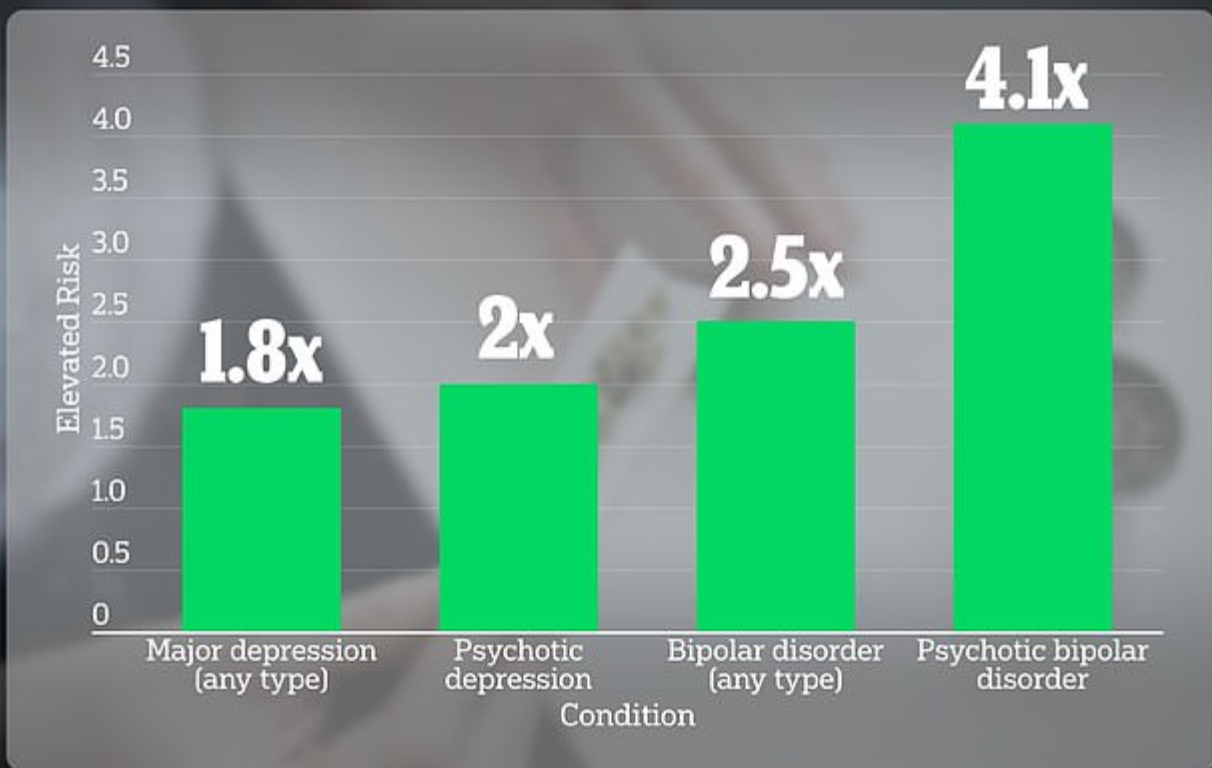
Chronic cannabis use significantly raises the risk of mental health problems and personality disorders, a major study suggests.

Research on more than 6.6million people in Denmark found that those who were addicted to marijuana were up to four times more likely to be diagnosed with major **depression** or bipolar disorder.

They looked at people with cannabis use disorder (CUD), defined as being unable to stop using the drug even if it was causing damage to their health and social lives.

Depression cases have been rising in recent decades, linked to growing and aging populations. But the researchers warn it could become more common as **marijuana becomes increasingly legal**. It can be used recreationally in 22 US states.

WEED'S STRAIN ON MENTAL HEALTH



Data Source: Aarhus University Hospital, Denmark | Graphic: DailyMail.com

The analysis of 6.6 million people found that chronically smoking cannabis raises the risk of psychotic bipolar disorder by 4.1 times, and any type of depression by 1.8 times

The researchers found that 14 percent of individuals with cannabis use disorder were later diagnosed with bipolar disorder

TRENDING

Researchers from the Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark analyzed the medical records of people born between 1995 and 2021.

All participants were at least 16 years old. They were all also from Denmark, where recreational cannabis use is illegal, but it can still be accessed via the black market.

Participants' medical files were checked for cannabis use disorder, histories for major depression, with and without psychotic features, and bipolar disorder with and without psychotic features.

Major depression is defined as feeling low or uninterested in activities you previously enjoyed for more than two weeks.

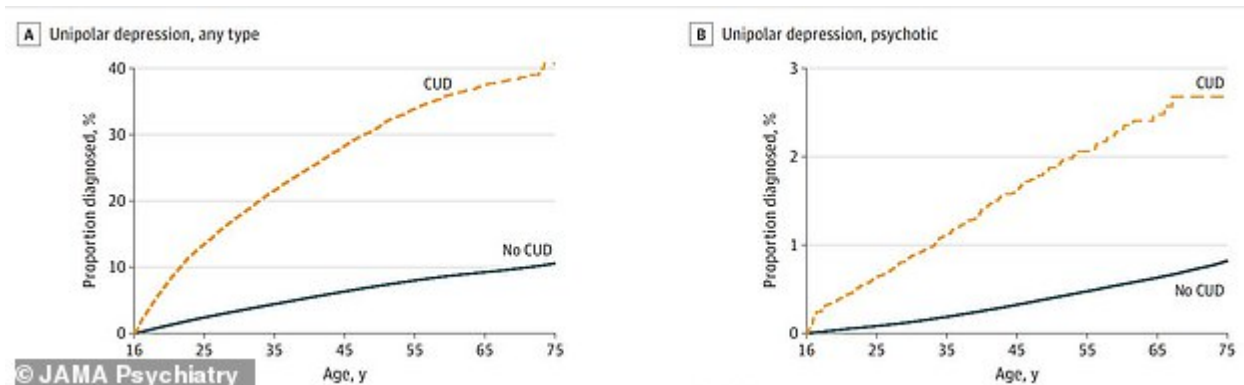
Bipolar disorder is a condition causing episodes of mood swings that range from depressive lows to manic highs.

Psychotic features such as delusions, hallucinations, talking incoherently and agitation can accompany either disorder.

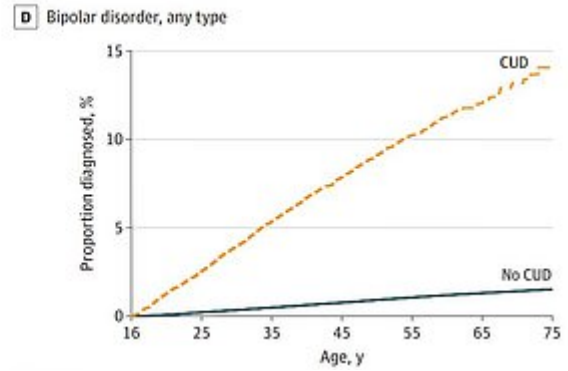
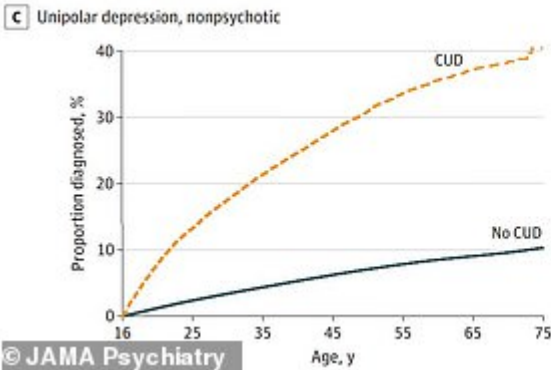
Roughly 56,000 participants had cannabis use disorder.

Some 41 percent of those individuals were diagnosed with major depression. Almost all (96 percent) of those diagnoses were nonpsychotic major depression.

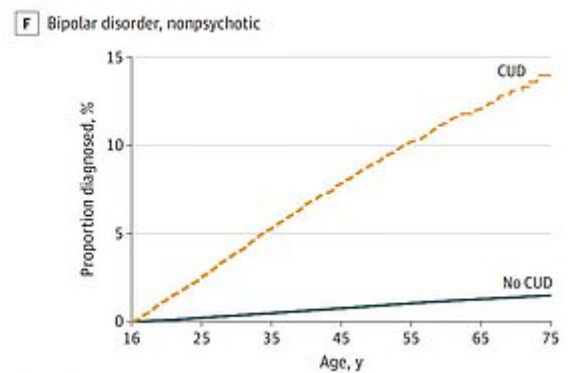
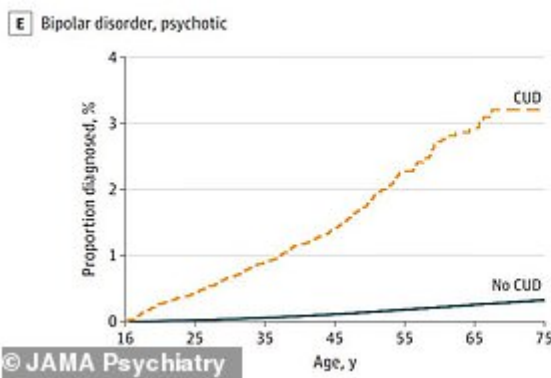
Risks of major depression were highest immediately after a diagnosis of cannabis use disorder, but they stayed 'significantly elevated up to five to 10 years after CUD', the researchers said.



Roughly 56,000 participants had cannabis use disorder. Some 41 percent of those individuals were diagnosed with major depression



• **Almost all (96 percent) of the major depression diagnoses were for nonpsychotic depression**



• **The findings align with previous research which showed significant links between cannabis use and depression, but not bipolar disorder**

They also found that 14 percent of individuals with cannabis use disorder were later diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Again, most patients (90 percent) had nonpsychotic bipolar disorder.

Cannabis use disorder was associated with a higher risk of any kind of bipolar disorder in men, with men three times more likely to suffer the condition compared to 2.5 times in women.

This was the same for nonpsychotic bipolar disorder, with male chronic cannabis users three times more likely and female users 2.6 times to be diagnosed.

READ MORE: Teens who smoke cannabis are six times more likely to get schizophrenia

Smoking the drug at low frequencies came with the same six-fold increased risk of getting the mental disorder as doing it daily.

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The findings align with previous research which showed significant links between cannabis use and depression, but not bipolar disorder.

The results point to a 'primarily psychotogenic effect of cannabis', meaning its ability to cause a psychotic reaction which could include delusions, delirium and hallucinations.

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main psychoactive element of cannabis, acts on cannabinoid receptors and is thought to increase the risk of psychosis by disrupting normal functioning of the part of the brain which processes information and dictates behavior.

The researchers noted that 'a coherent model for how cannabis may influence the development of affective disorders is lacking'.

Evidence that stopping cannabis use can reduce the risk of being diagnosed with a mental disorder is also lacking, they said.

They said their findings show that there is a need for 'improved knowledge on the dose-dependent effects of cannabis use on brain, cognition, and behavior' and have implications regarding cannabis legalization.

The study was published in the journal **JAMA Psychiatry**.

Several studies have found links between cannabis and schizophrenia in the past, though the exact cause is not clear.

Marijuana can cause psychosis, impairing the way you think, make decisions, handle emotions, and interact with reality.

It can also interfere with brain development in young people.

But it may be that people who are schizophrenic simply use cannabis to ease their symptoms.

Mental strain: Marijuana may be behind 30 PERCENT of schizophrenia

cases in young men, major NIH-funded study suggests

- National Institute on Drug Abuse study included 6million people aged up to 50
- Dr Nora Volkow, the agency's director, called for 'urgent action' over weed use
- [READ MORE: Teens using weed have a six-fold increased risk of schizophrenia](#)

By [LUKE ANDREWS HEALTH REPORTER FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](#)

Marijuana may be driving a surge in schizophrenia cases among young men, a major Government-funded study suggests.

Researchers backed by the National Institute on Drug Abuse estimated 30 percent of schizophrenia cases in men aged 21 to 30 are linked to cannabis addiction.

Overall across all age groups, the analysis of 6 million people found 15 percent of diagnoses in men and four percent in women could be attributed to the drug.

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Dr Nora Volkow, NIDA director and co-author of the study, said the results called for 'urgent action' and demanded people think twice before smoking marijuana.

Schizophrenia cases have been rising in recent decades, linked to growing and aging populations. But the researchers warn it could become more common as [marijuana becomes increasingly legal](#).

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[Marijuana may be driving a surge in schizophrenia cases among young men, a study has warned \(stock image\)](#)

TRENDING

Dr Volkow said: 'The entanglement of substance use disorders and mental illnesses is a major public health issue, requiring urgent action and support for people who need it.'

'As access to potent cannabis products continues to expand, it is crucial that we also expand prevention, screening, and treatment for people who may experience mental illnesses associated with cannabis use.'

She added: 'The findings from this study are one step in that direction and can help inform decisions that health care providers may make in caring for patients, as well as decisions that individuals may make about their own cannabis use.'

READ MORE: Teens who smoke cannabis are six-times more likely to get schizophrenia

Smoking the drug at low frequencies came with the same six-fold increased risk of getting the mental disorder as doing it daily, results from the Caribbean-based study showed.

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Several studies have found links between cannabis and schizophrenia in the past, though the exact cause is not clear.

Marijuana can cause psychosis, impairing the way you think, make decisions, handle emotions, and interact with reality.

It can also interfere with brain development in young people.

But it may be that people who are schizophrenic simply use cannabis to ease their symptoms.

About 2.8million adults in the United States have the condition, estimates suggest.

Patients suffer symptoms including losing touch with reality, hallucinations, paranoia and an inability to answer questions. As a result, sufferers face problems in their personal and professional lives.

There is no cure for the condition, with doctors instead focusing on managing symptoms via anti-psychotic medications and therapy.

In the latest study, researchers in Denmark analyzed the medical records of six million people over five decades, from 1972 to 2021.

All participants were aged between 16 to 49 years at least once over the period surveyed.

They were all also from Denmark, where recreational cannabis use is illegal but it can still be accessed via the black market.

Participants' medical files were checked for cannabis use disorder, which was defined as being unable to stop using the drug even if it was causing damage to their health and social lives.

All cases were also checked for a schizophrenia diagnosis.

There were 45,327 cases of schizophrenia in the study.

A total of 60,563 participants were also diagnosed cannabis use disorder, of which three quarters were in men.

After factoring in other risk factors including alcohol use and parental history of schizophrenia, cannabis use disorder was linked to about 30 percent of diagnoses of schizophrenia in young men in the year 2021.

Researchers suggested that more schizophrenia cases were linked to cannabis use in men because this group was more likely to smoke the drug and smoke it more regularly than women.

Previous research has suggested that men are more likely to use the drug than women and to use it more regularly, which may be linked to peer pressure.

Nonetheless, the advent of other ways to use the drug — such as gummies — is now driving a rise in marijuana use among women.

The NIDA — which funded the study — has been outspoken in its warnings over cannabis use in the United States, warning that far too little is known about its health effects for the drug to be widely available for recreational use.

It has been spurred into action after as many as 22 states have rolled forward and legalized the recreational use of marijuana.

A growing body of studies warns, however, that the drug can damage brain development in adolescents and may raise the risk of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Dr Carsten Hjorthøj, a mental health expert at the University of Copenhagen who was involved in the research, said: 'Increases in the legalization of cannabis over the past few decades have made it one of the most frequently used psychoactive substances in the world, while also decreasing the public's perception of its harm.'

'This study adds to our growing understanding that cannabis use is not harmless and that risks are not fixed at one point in time.'

He warned back in 2021 that cannabis was 'not harmless'.

'There is, unfortunately, evidence to suggest that cannabis is increasingly seen as a somewhat harmless substance,' he told [CNN](#).

'This is unfortunate, since we see links with schizophrenia, poorer cognitive function, substance use disorders, etc.'

The study was published in the journal [Psychological Medicine](#).