

# Hemp for Health

Hemp seed oil may not be a miracle cure, but it sure is good for you.

by Gretchen Van-Monette  
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Over the centuries, hemp seeds and their oil have been recognized by various cultures as an effective herbal treatment for a variety of ailments, from constipation to PMS.

Today, research shows that hemp seed oil can have therapeutic benefits, including possibly reducing heart disease and cholesterol. "Hemp seed oil is starting to take its place as the most beneficial of all natural oils available today," says Tim Neal of Ferndale-based Great Lakes Hemp. Whether or not that's true, hemp seeds do offer some extremely important "good" fats: They contain essential fatty acids (EFAs), which is another term for the "good" polyunsaturated fats, says John Staines, vice president of Hempola, a hemp company near Toronto.

The three main EFAs are Omega 6 (linolenic acid), Omega 3 (alpha linolenic acid) and GLA (gamma linolenic acid). One hemp seed contains as much as 60 percent Omega 6, 25 percent Omega 3 and 4 percent GLA.

These "good" fats have reported therapeutic effects in treatments for acne, arthritis, some cancers, cholesterol, PMS and some heart conditions.

While there are other sources of EFAs, such as flax and canola oil, hemp seed oil provides the body with a broad spectrum of EFAs, says Dr. Joel Casman, a naturopathic doctor based in Southfield. "Hemp has a nice equal division of the Omegas, which is one advantage that hemp seed oil has over the other oils," he says.

Hemp seed oil also has high amounts of vitamin E, calcium, magnesium and potassium. Staines suggests taking a tablespoon of the oil every day to ward off osteoporosis and to help clean out the arteries.

**"Hemp seeds and their oils are going to be the vitamins of the 21st century."**

"Think of hemp seed oil as the anti-cholesterol oil," Staines says. David Klurfeld, chair of the nutrition and food science department at Wayne State University, agrees.

"Hemp seed oil has a very good ratio of Omega 3s and 6s, and these offer some of the better fats for reducing cholesterol," even if science doesn't quite understand how, he says.

One problem with hemp seed oil, Klurfeld notes, is that "hemp seed oil is like poppy seeds on a bagel — consuming it can get a false-positive drug test."

Essential fatty acids are sorely missing from most American diets, says John Roulac, co-author of *Hemp Foods and Oils for Health* (Hemptech, \$6.95, 62 pp.). Since human bodies can't make EFAs, we need to eat them. Hemp seed oil and seeds can be combined into many foods and supplements, Roulac says.

One of his projects is Nutiva, a hemp food line of his California-based company, Hemptech. The company has had a good response to its first food venture, a candy bar

made with hemp, flax, pumpkin and sunflower seeds held together with honey. In the first 90 days, they sold more than 30,000 bars. A new Nutiva organic hemp chocolate bar will be coming out soon. "Hemp seeds and their oils are going to be the vitamins of the 21st century," predicts Roulac. According to Morton Genser, co-director for the Great Lakes region of the Institute for Plant-Based Nutrition, hemp will be a major food product in the next millennium. "I have no doubt that hemp is the tree of life," he says. Hemp seed oil can be found at Good Food Company, Troy, Nutri-Foods in Royal Oak and various Merchants of Vino-Whole Foods locations. Great Lakes Hemp, Ferndale, 248-546-6117, carries hemp seeds, oils and hemp snacks.



CRRH Director, D. Paul Stanford, inspects the 1998 Swiss Marijuana Harvest

## SILVER BULLET OR POISON CHALICE: THE BIOWAR AGAINST DRUGS

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Scientific American

"Note: This short article appeared as a side bar on a longer article, "Biological Warfare Against Crops," by Paul Rogers, Simon Whitby, & Malcolm Dundo, all biological warfare experts from Bradford University in England." Last year the U.S. Congress approved a \$23-million antidrug program that includes research on plant pathogens. Among the target plants are those that produce narcotics such as cocaine, heroin and marijuana. Advocates of the program hail it as a potential breakthrough. Representative Bill McCollum of Florida, one of the co-sponsors of the legislation, said, "All of the indications are that this has the potential for making a big difference in the drug war.... This could be the silver bullet." Article I of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) bans the development, production and stockpiling of biological agents intended "for hostile purposes or in armed conflict." Also outlawed are biological weapons "that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes." Proponents of the use of plant pathogens against drug crops therefore point out that they would be used in cooperative programs with states in which the drugs are produced. Opponents of the plans have three concerns. One is that induced epidemics might, in some circumstances, spread to other plants.

Another is that plant pathogens could be used in drug-proclucing regions without the consent of the state in question. Whereas such use might be popular with antidrug agencies, it would almost certainly breach the BTWC and also set a dangerous precedent. The greatest concern, however, is that the development of a capability to destroy drug crops with plant pathogens will inevitably provide a wealth of knowledge and practical experience that could readily be applied in much more aggressive, offensive biological warfare targeting food crops.

## Hemp laws are proving to be a pain too

The federal government is investigating ending the ban on industrial hemp. "This review is based on the premise that public and commercial interest may be better served if the cultivation of Cannabis sativa L., hemp is authorized by the appropriate Federal and State entities."

Discussions, which have included DEA drug czar Barry McCaffrey, are apparently at a delicate stage. "We're making good progress," Scholtz said. "We had talks with General McCaffrey recently, but I don't want to make a comment on that right now." The review is still in progress, DEA spokeswoman Rogene Wade confirmed yesterday. "The DEA is reviewing the security issue that would be associated with the manufacture (of hemp)," she said. The agency is looking at the types of data that would be required for licensure, she said. It is not actually illegal to grow hemp (or marijuana, for that matter); you just need a federal license to do it. But, say hemp activists, you can't get a license.

That's what states ready to grow hemp hope will change soon. The fight in other states has not been easy. In Hawaii, Thielen said, the police lobby tried to kill the bill. "Practically all of the legislators were not aware of the distinction between the plants," she said.

In Oregon, pro-hemp legislation was killed out of "ignorance," said state Rep. Floyd Prozanski. In Oregon, hemp could become a renewable source of paper pulp. "In some states, they know it's rope, not dope. Other states are pigeonholed. The DEA's going to have to come around." There are further signs that may be happening. The DEA stopped arguing that hemp cannot be distinguished in the field from marijuana. "That's been pretty much shot down," Scholtz said. It's grown in 33 countries, including Canada, largely without law enforcement difficulties, he said.

Manufacturers have found plenty of uses for hemp — the Kentucky Hemp Museum displays dozens of modern products ranging from feed to clothing to fiberboard to lip balm. "You can eat it, wear it and live in it," said Jake Graves, the Fayette County farmer and chairman of the Kentucky Hemp Museum board. Whether there would be any money in it is something economists do not agree on. One University of Kentucky study found there would be little market for a Kentucky-grown product in a market flooded with cheap, foreign hemp. But another UK study last year estimated Kentucky farmers could make up to \$600 an acre. Canadian farmers are clearing \$300 an acre in profit, said North Dakota Rep. David Monson, who sponsored that state's bill. Monson pointed out that until the federal government lets them, North Dakota farmers can't grow hemp either. "I'd say there's a fairly decent possibility that it could happen next year," Monson said. "North Dakota is behind that all the way from the grass-roots to our governor." Now, he said, other states need to get involved. "If every state would do it, the federal government couldn't ignore it," he said. "Every time a state introduces legislation, it goes a step farther."

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Is there a difference between hemp and marijuana or is it all cannabis sativa? "Yes, there's a difference," said Scott Smith, UK agriculture associate dean, "in terms of the active ingredient, THC. "Botanically, they're the same species of plant ... but very different varieties." Industrial hemp contains less than 1 percent THC, while marijuana varieties typically have 5 to 20 percent. There are also differences in how hemp is grown and harvested. So, no matter how much you eat or smoke hemp products, you can't get high.

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