

THC Fact Sheet

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BLUF

Illicit drug use and prescription misuse remain critical threats to force readiness. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) continues to be the predominant substance detected among Sailors, accounting for 82.06% of all illicit positive urinalyses between FY2020 and FY2026. Additionally, THC is the leading substance cited in innocent ingestion cases. The Navy maintains a strict "zero tolerance" policy for substance misuse; Federal law and Navy regulations supersede all state, local, or foreign ordinances that permit the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances.

Who needs to know?

- All Sailors
- Triads, Chiefs Mess
- Civilian supervisors

What you need to know – key points

- **The accessibility of cannabinoid products is increasing across the U.S. and the world.**
- The Navy continues to have **zero tolerance** for drug misuse.
- Cannabinoids, such as THC, cannabidiol (CBD), hexahydrocannabinol (HHC) and other cannabis derivatives and variants, are ever-changing to mirror user interest and to evade detection and legal restrictions while also not regulated for safety.
- State legal status does not overrule federal military law and policy for Sailors.
- Only Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medications containing THC or CBD are valid if authorized by a Defense Health Agency (DHA) approved medical service provider.
- The best way to avoid THC and other prohibited cannabinoid product use is to be vigilant in reading ingredient labels of the items being purchased to ensure it does not contain prohibited substances, according to Navy regulations.

Sample POD/POW Notes

- THC products may be legal in your state, but **military law and Navy policy prohibits** the use of all marijuana and hemp-derived products. Protect your Navy career by avoiding cannabis and hemp-derived products.
- Cannabinoid-containing products can take on many forms like vapes, distillates, tinctures, topical products, gummies, chocolates, canna-butter, and infused food and beverages. Remember to check product labels!
- A growing number of variants, like delta-8 THC and HHC, are chemically synthesized or converted from readily available non-intoxicating CBD using harsh industrial solvents and acids, leaving behind toxic byproducts and heavy metal contaminants in products that can end up on retail counters and online with fake certificates of analysis falsely claiming non-detectable amounts of prohibited substances or chemical contaminants.
- THC positives have accounted for nearly 85% of all drugs detected across the Navy over the last 6 years! The Navy has zero tolerance for illegal drug use and prescription drug misuse.
- Secondhand smoke exposure is not a legitimate excuse for a failed drug test. While passive inhalation can sometimes leave trace amounts of THC in the body, the urinalysis confirmation cutoff levels are set high enough (15 ng/mL) specifically to eliminate "passive exposure" or "secondhand smoke" as a valid defense.
- The most common unintentional exposures to cannabis derived products occur in social settings and at the home of a family member or friend. Often cannabinoids are used by vaping and ingesting edibles due to the ease of concealment. It is a Sailor's responsibility to know what they are ingesting!

FAQ

Q. What is the difference between marijuana and hemp?

A. Marijuana and hemp come from the same species of plant (cannabis). Marijuana contains intoxicating cannabinoids like delta-9 THC in naturally large amounts and delta-8 THC in trace amounts. Hemp contains CBD, a non-intoxicating cannabinoid, in abundance but also contains THC at trace levels (no more than 0.3% Delta-9 THC).

Q. What is the difference between delta-8 and delta-9 THC?

A. Delta-9 THC is the main cannabinoid in marijuana. Delta-8 THC has similar intoxicating effects to the more potent delta-9 THC. Due to its low natural yield, virtually

all commercial delta-8 THC is semi-synthetic and manufactured from converting hemp-derived CBD using acids and chemical catalysts.

Q. What happens if a Sailor tests positive for THC?

A. Sailors who test positive for any form of THC (delta-8 or delta-9) are subject to adverse administrative separation processing and/or disciplinary action, potential loss of security clearance and removal from special duties.

Q. What types of products could contain THC?

A. THC can be found in food products, smoking or vaping products, drinks - including energy drinks and even bottled water - oils, lotions, and cosmetics. CBD can be found in many skin products, like lotions and oils used in personal health services - including spa treatments.

Q. Can Sailors use CBD products?

A. No. CBD products are not allowed under the Navy's drug policy. Often products marketed as CBD contain THC because of difficulties in eliminating all THC while extracting CBD from its source. Products that include THC are typically age-restricted and more expensive than non-THC products. These products often have information on their label indicating that the product contains THC because THC is often marketed as a selling feature. Coded terms like "full spectrum," "broad spectrum," "multi-spectrum," etc., indicate the product contains many different cannabinoids, like THC, even if labeled as CBD.

Q. Does the Navy allow Sailors to use hemp products?

A. No. ALNAV 074/20 prohibits Sailors and Marines from using any product made or derived from hemp, including CBD, regardless of the product's THC concentration, claimed or actual, and regardless of whether such product may lawfully be bought, sold, and used under the law applicable to civilians. "Use" means to inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise introduce into the human body. "Use" includes the use of hemp products designed to penetrate through the skin layer, including but not limited to transdermal patches. "Use" also includes the application or introduction onto the body of topical products containing hemp, such as shampoos, conditioners, lotions, lip balms, or soaps.

Q. Is medical marijuana allowed in the military?

A. In 2026, the Department of Justice (DOJ) rescheduled Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved marijuana-derived medications and marijuana cultivated, distributed, or possessed through a state-regulated medical marijuana program from Schedule I to Schedule III. Recreational marijuana remains a Schedule I controlled substance. This change in scheduling does not change military regulations.

Q. In addition to career impacts, what are the possible risks for use?

A. The use of intoxicating cannabinoids with alcohol or other drugs that slow brain activity, such as those used to treat anxiety, panic, stress, or sleep disorders, increases the risk of sedation and drowsiness leading to increased risk of injury. Research has shown that marijuana and related products cause liver damage, depression, paranoia, memory/processing problems, infertility, cardiac problems, and cancer. CBD specific side effects include changes in alertness, gastrointestinal distress, irritability, and agitation. Long-term effects have shown permanent IQ loss, increased risk for suicide and psychotic episodes, poor performance issues due to lack of coordination, slowed reaction time, increased likelihood for relationship problems, decreased educational outcomes, and lower career achievement.

Q. How can Sailors avoid unknowingly being exposed to THC?

A. Sailors should be educated on the Navy's zero tolerance policy on drug misuse, to include Navy prohibition on the use of hemp-derived products. One of the best ways to avoid unintentional THC product exposure is vigilance in reading the ingredient labels to ensure items do not contain substances that are prohibited by military laws or policy. Ingredients can be checked for prohibition status by searching the prohibited list on <https://www.opss.org/>. In addition, Sailors should steer clear of products that are marketed as "legal" alternatives to known prohibited drug products. Avoid locations where the sale, distribution and/or consumption of prohibited substances occur. Leave the area if drug use is discovered. Know the visual indicators on products like cannabis leaf symbols, display milligram (mg) on package front, and triangle delta (Δ) symbols.

Q. What should a Sailor do if they think they have accidentally ingested?**A. Seek medical treatment immediately if an emergency medical event occurs.**

Sailors should notify their chain of command immediately if they believe they have innocently or accidentally ingested THC. Sailors should not wait until a urinalysis occurs; notice to the command should occur **BEFORE** a urinalysis.