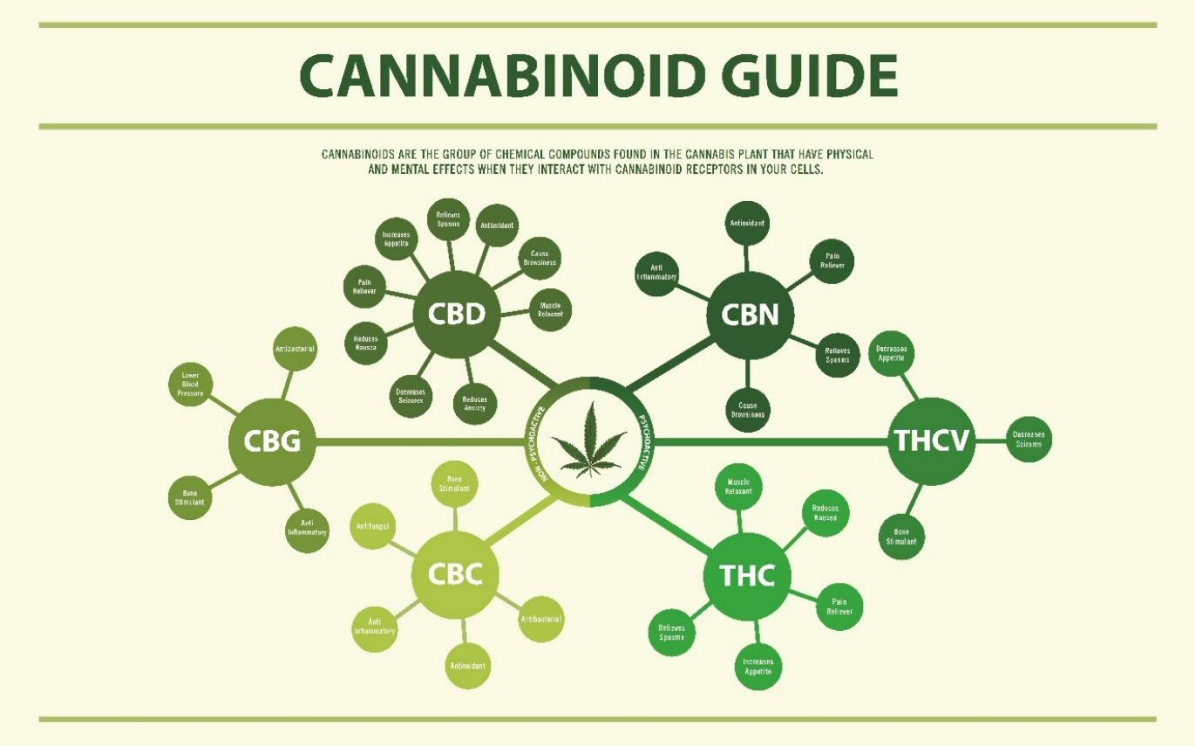
**Understanding the Minor Cannabinoids**

Medical cannabis has gained recognition as a therapeutic option for pain, spasms, and insomnia. As a result, there is growing interest in understanding the various cannabinoids (cannabis chemicals) and how they contribute to treating these conditions. THC (Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (Cannabidiol) are the best-known and studied of the numerous cannabinoids found in cannabis. However, there are over 100 cannabinoids present in the cannabis plant including three so-called "minor cannabinoids" Cannabinol (CBN), Cannabigerol (CBG), and Cannabichromere (CBC) which have been investigated for their therapeutic potential. Most available information about minor cannabinoids comes from preclinical research.

Unlike THC, none of the minor cannabinoids produce intoxication, although they are best used in combination with other cannabinoids rather than in large quantities by themselves. This is because cannabinoids seem to work best when used synergistically with one another, like instruments in an orchestra producing music. This is known as the "Entourage Effect." Because minor cannabinoids are present in some amounts in many medical cannabis products, it is best to learn about them.



Cannabinol (CBN) is the breakdown product of THC and is most often found in aged cannabis products. It is best known for its sedative properties and has been used to treat insomnia with or without associated chronic pain. It may enhance THC's sedating qualities when used to enhance sleep[1]. While there is limited scientific research about CBN's direct effects on sleep and musculoskeletal conditions, its potential as an anti-inflammatory agent is suggested by preclinical data[1]. There is no known risk associated with using CBN.

Cannabigerol (CBG) is thought to have pain-relieving, anti-inflammatory, and anti-anxiety properties. It is normally present in small amounts in cannabis. However, due to its effects on certain other receptors in the body (alpha receptors), it may carry some risks of slow heart rate (bradycardia), low blood pressure, or dry mouth when used in large amounts[2].

Cannabichomere (CBC) has been found in preclinical studies to enhance the anti-inflammatory effects of CBD and THC, likely has pain-relieving properties, and may prolong the effects of other cannabinoids in the body[3]. There is no known risk associated with using CBC.

While minor cannabinoids CBN, CBG, and CBD appear promising in treating pain, inflammation, anxiety, and insomnia, more well-designed human studies are required prior to drawing any firm conclusions. In the meantime, the available studies indicate that they are safe and non-intoxicating when used in small quantities and may be synergistic when used in conjunction with one another as well as with CBD and/or THC.


1- John McPartland and Ethan Russo, MD. Cannabis and Cannabis Extracts: Greater Than the Sum of Their Parts? In Cannabis Therapeutics in HIV/AIDS. (Vol. 1, No. 3/4, 2001) p. 107.
2- Ibid. p 108
3- Ibid. pp 107-108