

## YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

# Delta-8/10 THC

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### HOW DELTA-8/10 THC COMPARES TO TYPICAL CANNABIS

Delta-8/10 THC are isomers of Delta-9 THC, the psychoactive substance found in cannabis. The chemical compounds of Delta-8/10 THC are nearly identical to Delta-9 THC.

Delta-9 THC is the chemical in the cannabis plant that produces the “high” after smoking or eating cannabis products. Delta-8/10 THC in their natural form are much more sparse and much less potent than Delta-9, although they are still psychoactive. Most drug tests look for Delta-9, and thus may not catch Delta-8/10 THC.

Despite being less potent, Delta-8/10 THC can still produce effects through increased dosing. **They are legal** in many states where cannabis is not. The health effects of Delta-8/10 THC are largely unknown due to their scarcity in nature. While they may have similar risks to THC-9, additional risks may also be present.

### Where Do People Buy Delta-8? How Is It Made?

Delta-8 has become very ubiquitous. It is sold in vape shops, gas stations and convenience stores. It is most commonly sold in vapor and edible form, and is increasingly being sold in plant form. As Delta-8 THC doesn’t naturally occur in large amounts, it is synthetically made by converting CBD into Delta-8 THC. This synthetic creation process is *highly unregulated*.

### Health Risks

#### THE FDA IS CONCERNED.

Delta-8 THC products expose individuals to significantly higher levels of the substance compared to what naturally occurs in hemp or cannabis extracts.



As a result, previous research on cannabis cannot reliably assess the safety of these products for human use.

Several household products are utilized to facilitate the synthetic conversion as well as to enhance the appearance of the final Delta-8 THC product.

These products lack proper regulation and might be manufactured in unhygienic environments, potentially leading to the production of harmful contaminants during the synthesis process.

This poses serious risks to lung health and neurological well-being, raising significant concerns within the FDA.

### Advertising Strategies:

Without FDA approval or legal restrictions, Delta-8 advertisement is often aimed towards adolescents and includes false claims.

Delta-8 is marketed as a less intense, “lighter” version of cannabis. However, discussions in online forums show that it is largely being used to achieve the same effect as cannabis.

Delta-8 products are frequently sold as ‘hemp’ products with therapeutic benefits, leading people to overlook the psychoactive nature of the substance.

Delta-8’s advertisement towards adolescents is obvious. It is frequently sold as gummies, chocolates, cookies and candies. Gas stations with decoratively packaged joints, Delta-8 gummies, and vapes offer an accessibility to children.

## Prevalence of Delta-8

### USE IS ON THE RISE

There has been rapid growth in interest in Delta-8/10 THC products. In 2021 Delta-8 THC went from only 5% of cannabis-related google searches to more than onethird; nearly a 7x increase.

Google searches for the term grew by more than 850% in the United States between 2020 and 2021. Also, the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey of 2023 showed that early 30% of high school students had heard of Delta-8/10 THC products.

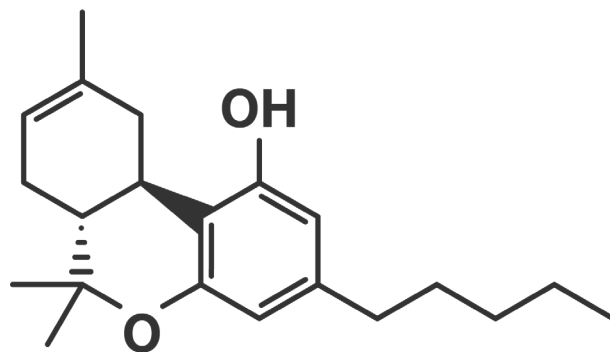
**As many as 41.2% of Florida high school students who have tried marijuana have also tried Delta-8/10 THC.**



This trend is certainly on the rise. Before June 2020, there was almost no evidence of interest in Delta-8 THC according to studies that monitor google search traffic and online forums.

Online searches for Delta- 8/10 are drastically higher in states where cannabis is illegal. This strongly indicates that Delta-8 is used as a substitute for cannabis, rather than as a 'lighter' version.

Until recently, there has been no public health surveillance data tracking Delta-8/10 THC use. In 2023, the Monitoring the Future Study measured



Delta- 8 use for the first time to investigate its popularity among high school teens.

The results showed a significant popularity and as a result, questions on Delta-8/10 THC will be added to future surveys for all age groups.

## Why Isn't It Illegal?

### DELTA-8 IS A LEGAL 'GRAY AREA'

The legality of Delta-8 THC is complicated. The 2018 Farm Bill legalized cannabis and cannabis derivatives with extremely low concentrations of Delta-9 THC. This allowed for companies to legally profit by selling hemp and CBD products.

However, due to the scarcity of naturally occurring Delta-8 THC, it wasn't mentioned in the bill. Due to its omission, a legal gray area was created, in which Delta-8 THC is technically legal under federal law.

Despite the ambiguity of federal law, some states have taken an active role in defining whether Delta-8 THC is illegal under state law. Such regulations are currently present in only 12 states.

Given the vagueness of federal law and the inconsistency of state regulation and enforcement, Delta-8 THC is consistently sold online. Acquiring the drug is rather easy for adolescents.

Delta-8 THC acts as a substitute in places where typical cannabis products are illegal. Furthermore, its legality undermines the discouraging effects of legal consequence that prevent individuals from turning to cannabis.

It is also sold in stores as a health product and a 'safe' alternative, attracting potential users who may be uncomfortable buying from a dealer.