



What is Delta-8 THC?

THC is tetrahydrocannabinol, a molecule produced by the plant Cannabis Sativa L. Delta-9 THC is famously the primary ingredient in marijuana that leads to intoxication. Delta-8 THC, as its name indicates, is another form of THC and it is structurally very similar to the delta-9 THC molecule.^[1] Because of its similarities, delta-8 can interact with the human body in the same way that delta-9 THC can, and it has a similar effect.^[2]

Chemists discovered that they can take a chemical commonly found in the hemp plant that is not intoxicating itself (CBD), and convert it in a lab into delta-8 THC.^[3]

Typically, a person could not simply smoke a hemp plant and get intoxicated, but the process of taking CBD and converting it will result in a chemical which can be used in edible foods such as gummies and consumed for that purpose. So while delta-8 and other intoxicants may technically be “derived from the hemp plant,” they are not naturally derived, for instance the way vanilla is extracted from a vanilla plant. Rather delta-8 is produced through a lab process that starts with building blocks that were derived from hemp, and put together to form new molecules.

^[1] Cannabis is a broad term that can include both hemp and marijuana. Both refer to different types of the same plant - Cannabis Sativa L. If the plant contains only trace amounts of delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol, or delta-9 THC, it is referred to as hemp. Over that amount, and it is often referred to as marijuana or sometimes cannabis.

Also note that some members of the cannabis community do not like the term “intoxicant” when used relative to cannabinoids. The term actually is used to describe the effect alcohol can have on the human body because alcohol itself is considered toxic. Cannabinoids affect the body differently and would not be considered toxic in the same respect, and so the term doesn’t really apply the same. A better option would perhaps be “inebriant,” but that might be confusing here and we stick with the more commonly used term intoxicant, even if it isn’t completely accurate.

^[2] Cannabinoids are molecules that come from the cannabis plant and can bind to receptors that are part of our endocrine systems. Those that do an effective job of binding are called “agonists,” and delta-8 and delta-9 are similar in their role as agonists.

^[3] For simplicity's sake, we will refer to these as “delta-8” products, but keep in mind that it could also apply to other cannabinoid formulations such as delta-10, THC-0 acetate, and HHC (and likely more will emerge).