



USE AT
OWN
RISK

Beyond the benefits: Recognising risks, side-effects & contraindications of CBPMs

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WHY THIS SESSION?

- Unlicensed CBPM use rising rapidly across UK clinical settings
- Patients seeking fast-acting, “natural” symptom relief
- Clinicians must balance benefit, safety, and patient trust
- **Aim: practical framework for safer prescribing**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES



Identify key adverse effects and risk factors



Recognise high-risk groups and contraindications



Understand drug-drug interactions



Apply structured risk-benefit reasoning



Communicate safety and monitor effectively

UK CONTEXT: UNLICENSED CBPMS

- Oils, capsules, flower, vape cartridges = unlicensed Schedule 2 drugs
- Prescriber holds full clinical accountability
- Requires clear documentation and ongoing review
- Legal, but unlicensed



CLINICAL CASE EXAMPLE

Sarah, 46, MS spasticity

- Partial benefit from CBD:THC balanced oil, T10C10
0.4mls morning 0.6mls evening
- Requests inhaled product for faster relief of
pain/spasms



How would you approach this
decision?



ROUTE AND RISK

Route	Onset	Duration	Key points	THC Exposure
Oral oils	30-90 min	4-8 h	Steady plasma levels	Moderate
Flower	5-10 min	1-3 h	Titrated inhalation	Moderate-high
Vape cartridge	1-5 min	1-3 h	Rapid, potent	High (>70 % THC)

VAPE CARTRIDGES

High-Potency Option

Potential benefits:

- Rapid relief (pain, spasm, acute anxiety)
- Compact, minimal odour, easy to use

Key risks:

- High THC → anxiety, tachycardia, insomnia
- Unpredictable dose per inhalation, dose stacking
- Quality / solvent concerns (newer potentially safer)



FLOWER

Titrated & Potentially Safer

- Generally Lower THC (but higher becoming available)
- Easier dose control than cartridges
- Avoids additives; known plant composition
- Still carries CNS and coordination risks



RISK SPECTRUM BY FORMULATION

Capsule / Oil → Flower → Vape Cartridge

↑ Potency & peak THC

↑ Adverse effect risk

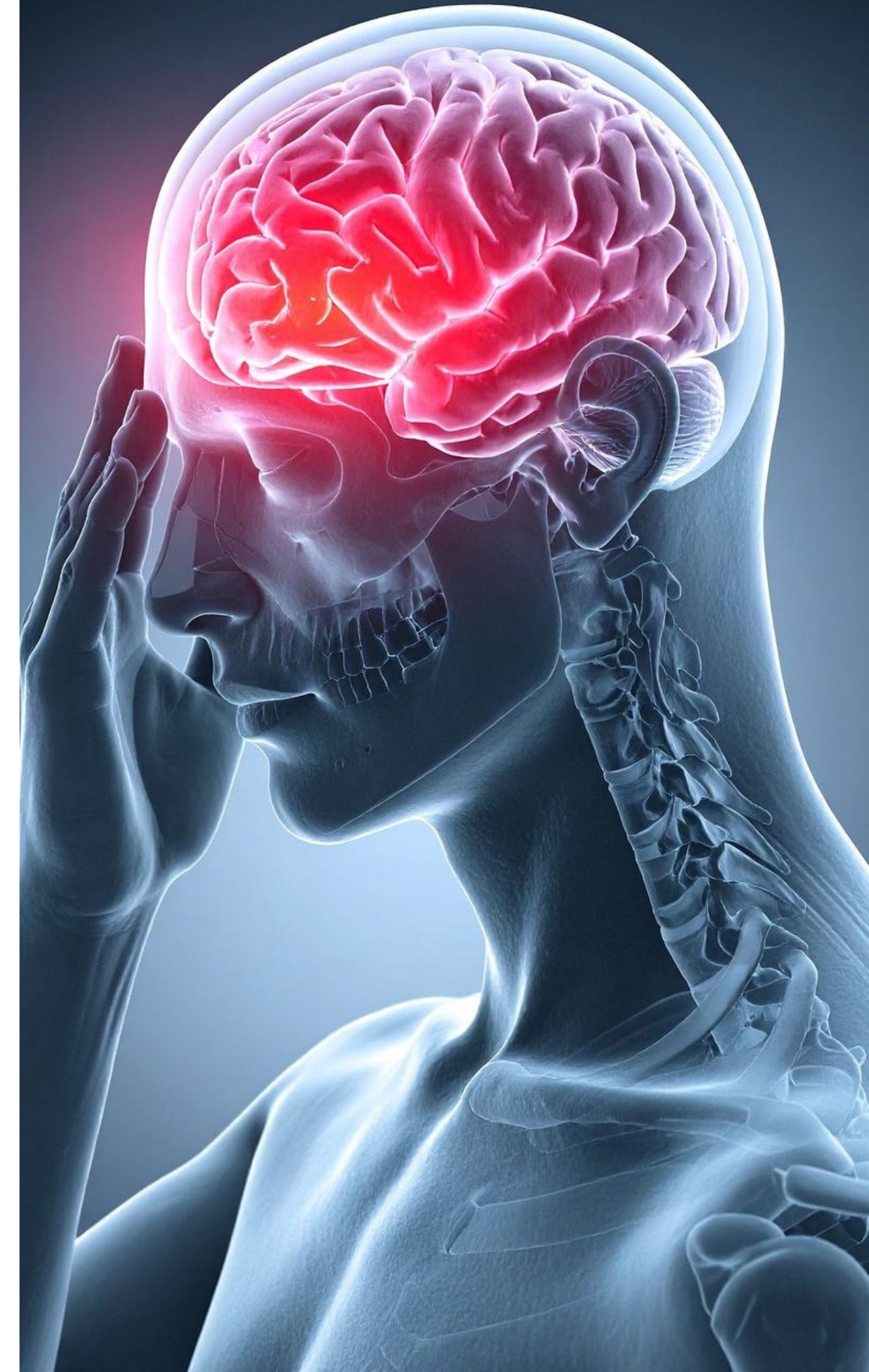


Start low - go slow - monitor closely



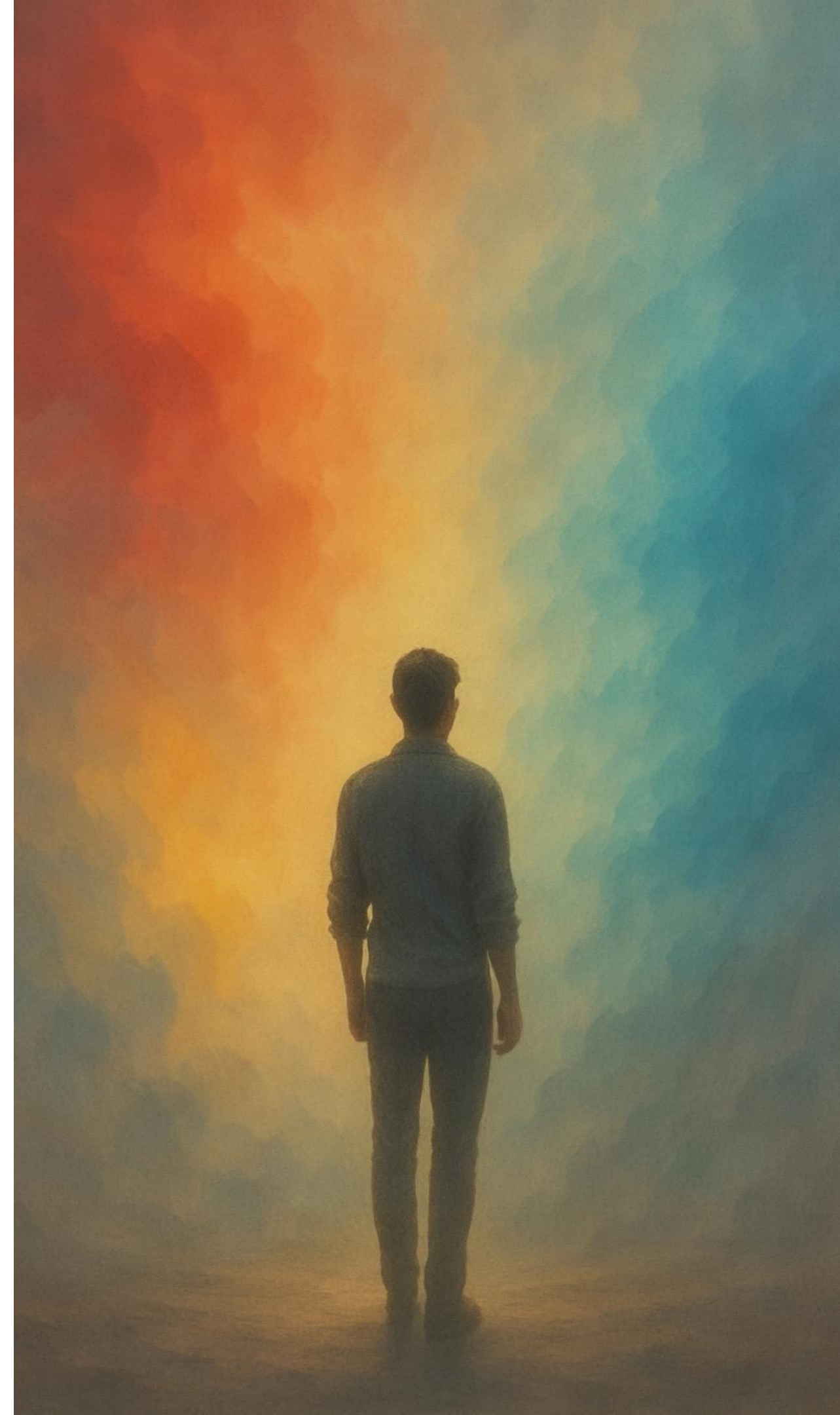
NEUROLOGICAL & COGNITIVE EFFECTS

- Dizziness, drowsiness, slowed reaction time
- Reversible cognitive slowing
- Driving & safety implications (DVLA guidance)



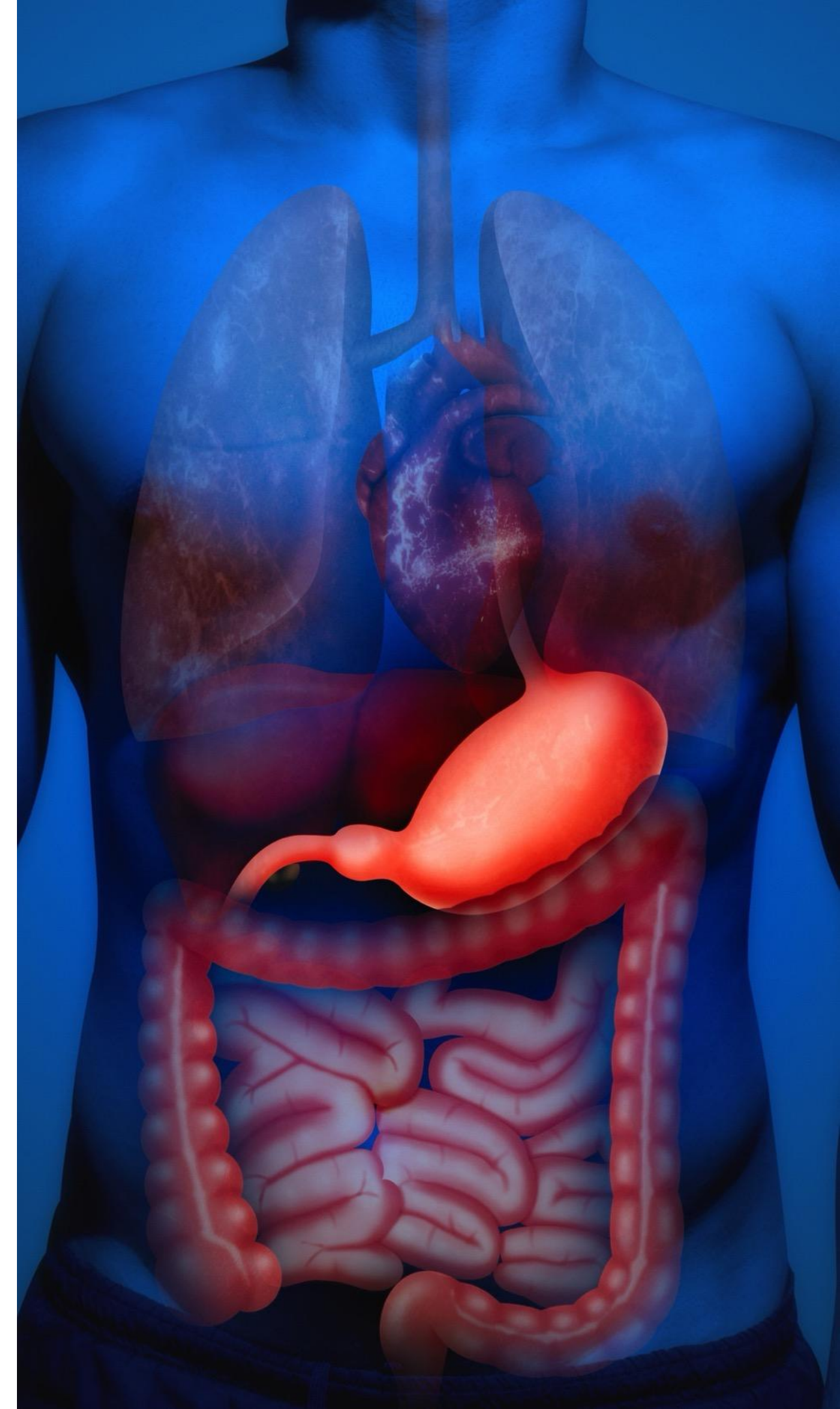
PSYCHOLOGICAL & MOOD EFFECTS

- Anxiety, irritability, transient paranoia
- Higher frequency with high-THC inhaled forms
- **Avoid** in psychosis or strong family history
- CBD may mitigate some effects



PHYSICAL & GI EFFECTS

- Dry mouth, appetite change, nausea
- **CHS**: cyclical vomiting, hot bathing behaviour
- Management: stop cannabinoids, supportive care



CARDIOVASCULAR & SYSTEMIC RISKS

- Tachycardia, postural hypotension
- Rare arrhythmia / MI (↑ risk in cardiac patients)
- Vape cartridges: potential sympathetic surge
- Avoid in unstable cardiovascular disease



CONTRAINDICATIONS & CAUTIONS

<div>Absolute</div> <div>Caution</div>	
Psychotic illness	< 25 yrs
Pregnancy / lactation	Substance misuse
Unstable CVD	Hepatic impairment
Hypersensitivity	Frailty / polypharmacy

DRUG-DRUG INTERACTIONS

- CYP3A4 / 2C9 / 2C19 metabolism
- **CBD inhibits 2C19/3A4** → ↑ clobazam, SSRIs, warfarin, tacrolimus
- Additive sedation with opioids, benzodiazepines, alcohol
- Rapid absorption → larger interaction peaks



“WOULD YOU CONTINUE?”

CASE

- On T800 1ml vape cart plus 30mls T10C10 oil
0.5mls bd
- Improved spasm/pain → but mild anxiety and insomnia

What next?



Continue / Reduce / Switch / Stop?



RISK ASSESSMENT, COMMUNICATION, INFORMED CONSENT

- Full medical / psychiatric / substance-use history
- Explain unlicensed status and uncertainties
- Discuss driving, work, pregnancy precautions
- Provide written info & review plan
- Transparency builds trust



MONITORING & REVIEW

- Review benefit + adverse effects regularly
- Encourage patient dose / symptom diary
- Report harms (MHRA Yellow Card)
- Reassess benefit:risk each review



INTEGRATING RISK-BENEFIT THINKING

Safe Unlicensed CBPM Prescribing Principles:

1. Start low - go slow - titrate carefully
2. Screen for psychiatric & cardiovascular risk
3. Aim for lowest effective THC exposure ideally with CBD
“cover”
4. Communicate, document, review



Compassion with caution keeps patients safe.

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