

Jennifer Collins



Jennifer Collins of Fairfax, Virginia is 19 years old and suffers from Jeavons syndrome and can have up to 300 or more absence seizures a day. Her seizures would often cluster and cause grand mal seizures as well. She tried and failed 15 anti-epileptic medications, but either they didn't work, or the side-effects were unbearable. They included rages, cognitive functioning issues, depression, weight gain, and ovarian issues, to name a few. The side-effects were devastating for her. She couldn't control her behaviors, and she wanted to hurt herself.

Out of options, her mother spoke with Jen's neurologist about trying cannabis as a treatment, and he said, "If I could legally obtain this for you here, I would. It is worth a try." So, in December of 2013 to Jennifer and her mother moved to Colorado, separated from her father, sister, extended family, friends, and support community to give her the opportunity to try cannabis. The Collins family didn't make this decision lightly. They left to give Jennifer the opportunity to find relief from her seizures, and the harmful side effects of her medications through medical cannabis. They stayed in Colorado for one year.

While in Colorado, Jennifer started taking non-psychoactive Tetrahydrocannabinolic acid (THCa) oil, a tiny amount administered by a syringe under her tongue three times a day. Not only did her absence seizures lessen drastically and her tonic clonic seizures disappear, but she was able to lower the doses of her pharmaceutical medications. The rages stopped, the thoughts of suicide stopped, she lost the 30 pounds she had gained upon starting medication, and her cognition and school grades improved.

Jennifer wrote to the Virginia General Assembly asking them to change the law so she could return home and legally take her oil. In response, Senator Marsden submitted SB1235. She returned to Virginia in 2015, and fought hard with other families for SB1235 and Delegate Dave Albo's bill, HB1445 to give people like her with intractable epilepsy the ability to take Cannabidiol oil (CBD) or THCa to treat their seizures without fear of prosecution. The bill passed unanimously, and she has since worked with her mother and other Virginia families for the past four years to pass laws allowing production and distribution of the oils to patients with any condition upon a doctor's recommendation.

Jennifer has been an inspiration to many people, especially those suffering from intractable epilepsy who need this medicine. **She has not had a grand mal seizure since starting cannabis oil five years ago.** In addition, she is completely off all pharmaceuticals.

If you would like to learn more about Jennifer's journey, you can watch the Documentary, "[The Life She Deserves](#)," produced by the Brookings Institution.

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