I Don't Want to Get High

A lot of people that could benefit from using cannabis avoid using it because they don't want to get high or experience side effects like paranoid thinking, agitation, and euphoria. They have busy lives, with kids and jobs, and need to be able to respond to the demands of their commitments. There are two ways to manage this legitimate concern:

- When buying cannabis, **read the labels**. In Washington State, cannabis labels must display the percentage of two main plant components: THC and CBD. **Products with lower levels of THC and higher levels of CBD** typically don't make people feel as "high" as products with more THC.

- **Begin with a very low dose** and slowly increase the dose until you find an amount that works best to relieve your pain while allowing you to function normally Unwanted effects tend to decline over time as your body gets used to cannabis.

Start Low, Go Slow!

A health care provider can assist a person experiencing these and other side effects. Don't be afraid to ask questions!

Safety Considerations

Medicinal cannabis products should be **stored in a secure place** with childproof locks to minimize the risk of children or pets consuming them.

Those using medicinal cannabis **should not drive or operate heavy machinery** immediately after using cannabis or whenever side effects of cannabis are felt.

Where Can I Learn More?

Learn About Marijuana: Science-Based Information for the Public
http://learnaboutmarijuanawa.org
Valid and easily-understandable information about marijuana for the public. Find factsheets on a variety of marijuana-related subjects, as well as a page for adult consumers of marijuana.

Americans for Safe Access
http://www.safeaccessnow.org
ASA is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring safe and legal access to cannabis for therapeutic uses and research. The website includes sections with resources for patients and for health care providers.

Patients Out of Time
http://www.MedicalCannabis.com
This non-profit organization focuses on the education of both health care providers and the general public about medical cannabis.

Need Help Quitting or Reducing Your Use of Medicinal Cannabis?

Washington **Recovery Help Line**
866·789·1511

Do you need help or advice? Call Marijuana Anonymous
1-800-766-6779
Free call within the United States.

Medicinal Cannabis & Chronic Pain

Information for patients considering the use of medicinal cannabis to treat chronic pain or other health issues.

Do you suffer from persistent pain that isn't getting better after trying recommended treatments?

If you'd like to consider another treatment option, your clinician can help you by providing information about the use of **medicinal cannabis** (also called "medical marijuana") for pain.

Medicinal cannabis can be effective in managing many types of chronic pain. Talk to your doctor to learn more about whether the chronic pain you have might be helped with cannabis.

Is Medicinal Cannabis Safe?

Cannabis is a relatively safe medication when compared to many of the prescription drugs widely used for pain control, such as opiates (OxyContin, Percocet, etc).

The main difference is that **cannabis does NOT result in overdose death**. This does not mean, however, that there are no risks. Some of the risks include:

- **You can get hooked (addicted) on marijuana**: Marijuana is not as addictive as things like cigarettes or alcohol, but about 9% of the people who smoke marijuana for fun will become addicted to it. There is no information on how many people get addicted to cannabis

when they use it only as a medicine. If you are afraid of getting hooked, talk to your doctor about ways you can prevent this.

- People with a **personal or family history of psychiatric disorders** who use cannabis are at higher risk to develop or aggravate an already present psychiatric disorder.

- Cannabis can be **dangerous for people with cardio-pulmonary disease, respiratory insufficiency, or liver or kidney disease**.

- Cannabis may harm a developing fetus or infant, so **should not be used by pregnant or nursing mothers**.

Because of these issues, be sure to have an open conversation with your doctor about your health history – cannabis may help your pain but you want to be sure to consider potential risks carefully.

Do I Have to Smoke My Medicine?

A lot of people don't like the idea of having to smoke a "joint" to control pain.

This is a valid point: **smoking should be avoided** if possible, since it may cause or exacerbate bronchial irritation.

The good news is that you don't have to smoke cannabis to use it as a medicine.

Medicinal cannabis can be inhaled using a **vaporizer** instead. Vaporizers heat the cannabis just below the point of combustion,

causing the active compounds to evaporate, eliminating the harmful by-products of combustion.

Not all vaporizers are alike – devices known as "vape pens" have not been tested and do not have quality control. They may do more harm than good and should be avoided until more information is available.

Eating or drinking products infused with cannabis, like brownies or teas, also works. However, you should be careful when eating or drinking cannabis to avoid taking too much. Because it takes longer to feel the effects when cannabis is consumed this way, be sure to start with a small amount and wait 30 minutes to 2 hours before taking more.

There are other options too: **Extractions and tinctures** are concentrates that may be eaten, smoked, or applied topically, depending on the extraction method used.

They can be administered under the tongue by using an eye dropper to control the number of drops used, or applied to the skin in a lotion or cream.

Talk to your doctor to discuss the pros and cons of these different methods of taking medicinal cannabis.