



Methods, Forms and Routes of Medical Marijuana Administration

Using Cannabis for Therapeutic Use

Smoking

Smoking cannabis produces the most immediate relief and permits the most refined control of your dosage. When cannabis is smoked, the active ingredients are deposited directly into the blood stream after being absorbed through the mucus membrane of the lung.

Determining correct dosage is easier with smoked cannabis since the effects are usually felt within 30-60 seconds and develop fully within 5-15 minutes. The effects may last from 30 minutes to 3 hours. Cannabis dosage is fairly easy to manage. Take 1-2 puffs and wait 5-15 minutes in order to assess the right dosage. Take more puffs as needed. With reasonably high potency cannabis buds a small number of puffs (1-3) are generally enough.

While smoking any material is not good for the lungs, the amount of cannabis you need to smoke is so small you should not be overly concerned. There are various methods of smoking cannabis that can reduce bronchial irritation while obtaining the medicinal benefits of the plant. These methods include:
Hand Rolling

For those that can tolerate smoking hand rolled cannabis cigarettes or joints are the most common and widely used method. Cannabis may be ground or cut and then rolled into a joint. Using natural-based chemical free rolling papers such as those derived from hemp or rice is recommended for health reasons and to avoid using tree products.

Pipes

Pipes can be used to avoid smoking paper and are useful when smoking small quantities.

We recommend glass pipes to prevent ingestion of possible harmful by-products from pipes made from other sources of material. Glass pipes have been found to provide a very clean burn and impart no chemicals.

Water pipes

Water pipes can be used to cool the temperature of the inhaled smoke. Contrary to popular belief, studies have shown that the inhaled THC content may actually be decreased by this method.

Vaporizing

Vaporizers can be used as a smokeless alternative. Cannabis vaporizers are designed to let users inhale active cannabinoids while avoiding smoke. Vaporizers work by heating the cannabis just below the point of combustion, the point at which smoke is produced. When the cannabis is properly heated, THC and other cannabinoids are emitted in the form of a vapor. This markedly reduces the amount of irritating particulate materials that get inhaled, resulting in much less inflammation and damage to the lining of the lungs. Many patients who find smoked cannabis highly irritating report effective relief inhaling through vaporizers. Vaporizing is believed to mitigate many if not all of the negative effects of smoking.

Dose is through self titration (gradually adjusting the dose of medicine until the desired effect is

achieved). The procedure for vaporizing is similar to smoking. It is advised to wait a few minutes to feel the full effect before taking more.

Eating

Cannabinoids can be extracted into fat (butter or oils) and then ingested, usually in the form of baked goods or in candy-like products. When cannabis is digested, the active ingredients are metabolized in the liver before entering the blood stream. The effects of ingested cannabis may be felt within 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on metabolism and may last from 2-8 hours with the side effects being stronger than those felt by smoking. Therefore, it is more challenging to regulate the dosage. You cannot overdose on cannabis, however side effects can be intense and overwhelming. Use caution when trying edible products especially if you did not make them. Try small doses at first and give yourself a few days to figure out the correct titration.

Tea

Like other herbs, cannabis can be made into a tea. Boil the water first and pour it over the cannabis. Allowing the cannabis to steep for approximately an hour and a half will ensure extraction of the cannabinoids. The effects are similar to eating it.

Tincture

A tincture is a process of using alcohol to extract cannabinoids from the plant into a liquid form. Tincture preparations have a similar effect as eating cannabis but the onset happens more rapidly and wears off more quickly. Tinctures may be dropped or sprayed into the mouth to be absorbed into the mucous membranes. Effects of tinctures are usually felt within 5 minutes up to 1 hour and last about 4 hours. It is recommended to start with about 3 drops of tincture, and wait an hour before increasing the dosage incrementally and as necessary.

Alcohol based tinctures may also be dropped into hot water in order to let the alcohol evaporate and then ingested. Effects will be the same as they are for ingested cannabis.

Topical treatments

Cannabis can be absorbed through the skin and so it is ideal for topical ointments.

Marinol

Marinol is a synthetic petrochemical analog of THC, one of the active elements found in marijuana. Some patients find it helps relieve nausea yet takes a long time to work. This product is made for ingestion, do not smoke it. It has the potential for overdose. Use only under the supervision of a doctor.