

If you're considering medical cannabis as a treatment option for yourself or for a loved one, you probably have more questions than answers. The sheer volume of information available about cannabis can feel overwhelming.

This resource document is the fourth of four documents. It examines a number of the myths and facts surrounding medical cannabis. If you have questions that are not answered here, have a look at the other three resource documents.

It is important to speak with your physician about medical cannabis therapy. We hope that these resource documents will help provide you some valuable information to better prepare yourself for that discussion.

Medical Cannabis Myths and Facts

Myth: Marijuana is an illegal street drug.

Fact: As long as your doctor has authorized you to purchase medical cannabis, and as long as that cannabis is purchased through a Licensed Producer (LP) it is 100% legal.

Myth: Marijuana is marijuana. It doesn't matter where you get it.

Fact: Medical cannabis sold by LPs is grown in tightly-controlled conditions. Licensed Producers have to meet government mandated quality standards and test their products to ensure they are safe for patients. Studies have shown that cannabis purchased from the street or from dispensaries frequently contains heavy metals, pesticides, mould and other contaminants.

Myth: The only reason people use marijuana is to get stoned.

Fact: Many patients see the "high" that comes with some medical cannabis products as an unwanted side effect. It is important to know the difference between delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). THC is responsible for the high, meaning products with a higher percentage of THC may cause the unwanted side effect or the feeling of being intoxicated. Cannabis with a higher percentage of CBD and a low percentage of THC is unlikely to produce this side effect.

Myth: To use medical cannabis, I'll have to smoke joints.

Fact: Vaporization is the optimal delivery method for dried flower cannabis. Unlike smoking, vaporization is achieved by heating the cannabis to a temperature that vaporizes, but does not burn the cannabinoids, virtually eliminating the health risks associated with smoking. Some LPs offer cannabis oils, which let patients ingest their medicine, and have opened the door for patients who can't, or prefer not to, inhale cannabis vapor. Oils are made up of cannabinoids, like THC and CBD, which are removed from the cannabis plant and then infused into edible oil.

Myth: If my boss finds out I use medical cannabis, I'll be fired.

Fact: For many employers, medical cannabis is a new concept and they may not have policies in place to specifically address it. However, medical cannabis is a legal medication prescribed by your doctor, so you should feel confident discussing it with your employer.

Because it can help alleviate symptoms, many patients find medical cannabis improves their ability to work. The likelihood of your prescription being covered by insurance will increase if your employer believes medical cannabis is helping with your employment.

Myth: Once I have a prescription, I can legally buy medical marijuana anywhere.

Fact: When your doctor completes your medical document and you become registered with an LP, you can order from that LP only. You can register with more than one LP at a time, but your doctor must complete a separate medical document for each different LP.

Marijuana bought from the street or from a dispensary is illegal even if you are already registered with an LP.

Myth: Once I have a prescription, I can take my medical cannabis with me anywhere.

Fact: As long as you are travelling within Canada you can take your medical cannabis with you. When travelling, keep your cannabis in its original container, take all your paperwork with you and follow these steps if travelling by plane:

- Pack your medical cannabis in your carry-on luggage.
- Airlines and airports have their own rules to follow. Call both in preparation for your trip, and arrive at the airport at least an extra hour early in case they need to verify your information with your LP or law enforcement. This is a routine procedure.

If you are crossing any border – by car, plane or boat – leave your cannabis and any cannabis-related products at home. Many countries have a “zero-tolerance” policy so please don't take the risk.

Myth: My cannabis is medicine so I can drive while I'm on it, no problem.

Fact: As a medical cannabis patient you need to be very careful you aren't intoxicated when operating vehicles or other heavy machinery. Even though your prescription is completely legal, you can be charged for driving under the influence of marijuana and more importantly it can be dangerous.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada gives this advice: Patients taking medical cannabis should be advised not to drive for at least 4 hours after inhalation and 6 hours after oral ingestion. If the patient experiences euphoria, the College suggests waiting 8 hours.

Myth: Cannabis cures cancer.

Fact: Medical cannabis can ease many of the symptoms cancer patients experience, including pain and side effects from chemotherapy. Medical cannabis should not be used as a substitute for conventional cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, and you should consult your doctor before making changes to your medical therapy.

Some studies have suggested THC and CBD can help slow tumour growth, but the evidence is very limited and it is irresponsible to use it to position cannabis as a cure for cancer.

For more information, please contact
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