



DR BLAKE'S 10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MEDICAL MARIJUANA

1. **If you are a California state resident, all you have to do to legally use, possess and grow marijuana is to have been diagnosed with a qualifying condition and get a Medical Marijuana Recommendation from a Physician.**
 - In order to obtain a physician's recommendation for medical marijuana, you need a **Qualifying Diagnosis**. You do not have to be going blind from glaucoma or dying of aids to obtain medical marijuana. California Health and safety code section 11362.5 (Prop 215) allows California residents to use cannabis as medicine with a doctor's recommendation and states the following: "The people of the State of California hereby find and declare that the purposes of the Compassionate Use Act of 1996 are as follows: To ensure that seriously ill Californians have the right to obtain and use marijuana for medical purposes where that medical use is deemed appropriate and has been recommended by a physician who has determined that the persons health would benefit from the use of marijuana in the treatment of cancer, anorexia, AIDS, chronic pain, spasticity, glaucoma, arthritis, migraine or **any other illness for which marijuana provides relief.**"
 - In order to receive a medical marijuana recommendation from a cannabis specialist you will be required to submit **MEDICAL RECORDS verifying your Qualifying Diagnosis**. These records do not have to come from a physician, but may also may be from any one of a number of approved, licensed, Health Care Providers, such as a Doctor of Chiropractic, an Acupuncturist, a Doctor of Naturopathy, a psychologist, a podiatrist, etc.
 - **Although medical records are required, you do not need to provide your entire medial records**, just a summary or "Problem list" along with a list of your medications from your provider. This is usually just one or two pages. But make sure that your qualifying diagnosis is on a letter head, prescription, or other properly documented medical or psychological or legal report
 - The Medical Marijuana Recommendation you receive will be valid for a maximum period of 12 months, depending upon your condition.
2. **You do not need to have a California State Medical Marijuana Identification Card (MMIC) to use, transport, possess or grow medical marijuana.** SB420 states: "the identification system established pursuant to this act must be wholly voluntary, and a patient entitled to the protections of Section 11362.5 of the Health and Safety Code need not possess an identification card in order to claim the protections afforded by that section." Therefore it is not necessary for a person to obtain a MMIC in order to claim the protections of Prop 215. A Medical Marijuana Recommendation issued by a physician is all you need to possess, grow, transport and/or use medical marijuana in California. If you are interested in getting a MMIC expect to pay ~ \$150.00 or more. See the California NORML Patient Guide for more information.
3. **Medical Marijuana patients may grow and/or possess enough medical marijuana for their own personal need.** Under the Compassionate Use Act (Prop 215) the amount that is permissible to possess or grow is that which is consistent with the current medical needs of the patient. In 2003 Senate Bill 420 was passed. SB420 set possession limits of 8 ounces of dried, processed cannabis bud and allowed patients to grow 12 plants of which 6 could be flowering. Counties were free to adopt higher possession and cultivation limits, but not lower. The California State Supreme recently overturned the possession and cultivation limits set by SB420 because a "senate bill" such as SB420 cannot place limits on a voter initiative, such as Prop 215; the voter initiative is the highest form of law in the state, other than Federal Law. This does not mean that you may grow as many plants as you want, but that you must be able to show that the number of plants you are growing and the amount of medical marijuana in your possession is consistent with your personal medical needs. Don't forget that if the state law enforcement officers grow tired of trying to prosecute you in state court, they have been known to turn your case over to Federal Law Enforcement Officers, who may prosecute you in Federal Court, where ALL Marijuana possession is considered illegal. Therefore, always keep your total number of plants to a minimum and below 100. Before growing be sure to educate yourself about the laws in your area. Those interested in growing are advised to seek legal counsel.
4. **Post a copy of your physician recommendation and/or California MMIC by your garden to prevent the police from pulling your plants.** The state MMIC may be more respected by police than the physician's recommendation letter alone. Those intending to grow medical marijuana should strongly consider getting the state issued MMIC.
5. **Keep the Marijuana in the trunk of your car when transporting it.** If your vehicle does not have a trunk, I recommend that you keep it in a locked container. Treat Medical Marijuana like an open container of alcohol; don't give a law enforcement officer a reason to charge you with driving under the influence of marijuana. Additionally, it is illegal to cross state lines or international borders with medical marijuana in your vehicle or on your person.

6. **Keep your medical marijuana in a safe place, out of the reach of children.**

- Treat it like you do all other medicines and keep it out of the reach of children.
- If you cook with medical cannabis, clearly label any resultant food products as medicinal, and store them in a safe place, out of the reach of children.
- Use discretion when medicating and avoid doing so when children are present.
- If your children can understand, specifically explain to them that the marijuana is your medicine and that is not for them (much like any other prescription medications).
- Be sure to let them know that it is a private matter, like any other medical information.
- In a dual-parent household, work out a routine with your partner where one parent is always unmedicated in case any unexpected crisis should arise.
- Never operate a motor vehicle after medicating.

7. **Marijuana is “relatively” safe!** “Marijuana, in its natural form, is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man.” - DEA Administrative Law Judge Francis Young *Docket No. 86-22. 1988*

- For 30 years I treated emergency department patients presenting with overdoses of every drug and substance imaginable. No one ever died from a marijuana overdose. I cannot say the same about patients presenting with overdoses of alcohol, Xanax, anti-depressants, narcotic pain relievers or sleeping pills; all of which are potentially fatal!
- Although there are no serious adverse drug-drug interactions with cannabis, it should not be mixed with alcohol or sedatives because of the uncertainty of the combined effects upon ones level of consciousness, judgment and coordination.
- In pregnancy Cannabis is classified in Category C; this means that the drug has been shown to be harmful to the fetus in some animal studies but there have been no confirming studies in humans. The bottom line with drugs classified Pregnancy Category C is that we really don't know with certainty one-way or the other. Just as is the case with all other Category C drugs, the potential benefit of using the drug must outweigh the risk. Before deciding to use a Category C drug during pregnancy, you should first try to treat the condition with safer alternatives from pregnancy category A or B. I wouldn't recommend using Medical Marijuana while Pregnant unless your condition necessitates treatment and there are no safer therapeutic alternatives.
- There are reports of Psychological withdrawal after using marijuana; cannabis dependency appears to be a risk for some people. Be careful about how often you medicate with cannabis; you can over do it. Cannabis works best when used in moderation. Only use it when your symptoms absolutely require that you do so. Depending upon the condition being treated, I generally recommend that my patients abstain at least 2 days per week and avoid using cannabis multiple times a day, week after week.
- Marijuana does not harm target organs such as the liver or kidneys and it does not cause lung cancer, a fact which even surprised the renowned marijuana researcher Donald Tashkin, M.D.

8. **Be careful with edibles!**

When eaten, marijuana has an onset of action of 30 to 60 minutes, depending on a number of factors such as whether the edible was taken on an empty stomach. The peak effect cannabis consumed orally is approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The duration of effect is 4-6 hours or more, depending upon the dose taken. If you decide to eat a marijuana brownie, or other edible, be sure to wait a full 90 minutes before deciding to consume more. Edibles vary in strength and are sometimes much stronger than you think; be careful!

9. **You are restricted from using medical marijuana in the following places.**

- In any place where smoking is prohibited by law.
- In or within 1,000 feet of the grounds of a school, recreation center, or youth center, unless the medical use occurs within a residence.
- On a school bus.
- While in a motor vehicle that is being operated.
- While operating a boat.

Notice that you do not see the smoking section of a USC football game at the L.A. Coliseum included in the forbidden places listed above. In that situation it would probably be of benefit to have the county issued State MMIC.

10. **Don't drive under the influence of Medical Marijuana!** Recent studies have shown that it impairs ones ability to drive straight between the lines and patients under the influence of cannabis tend to drift to one side of the lane or the other.