

Introductory Guide
For New Medical Marijuana Patients
November 2018

Purpose

This brief introductory guide to medical marijuana use is intended to provide the basic information I believe Naturally Healing MD medical marijuana patients need to initiate safe medical marijuana usage. In my experience, over time, by following the guidelines provided, patients will find that medical marijuana can effectively reduce many symptoms that may impact their quality of life, like pain, anxiety, and insomnia. I look forward to helping you find the relief you seek!

Your Medical Marijuana Recommendation

After your visit with Laurie Vollen, MD, a Board Certified Preventive Medicine physician, licensed by the state of California, you will be given a valid medical marijuana recommendation for the State of California. Most recommendations issued by Naturally Healing MD are valid for one year - although some physicians issue recommendations for shorter durations.

This medical recommendation is your legal document that entitles you to the benefits of proposition 215, passed by the state of California in 1996. This groundbreaking law allows Californians with valid recommendations legal access to ALL dispensaries in the California system, where marijuana is legally sold.

Beginning in 2018, dispensaries can now apply for licensure as an Adult Use dispensary under Proposition 64, passed in November 2016. Those granted licensure will sell their cannabis products to adults 21 years or older, regardless of their status as medical marijuana patients.

Many cities (including Berkeley and Oakland) have already issued permits and many formerly medical dispensaries are now serving the recreational market.

Other areas have refused to issue licensure for any dispensary, while some are only allowing medical dispensaries for those with a valid physician-issued recommendation. All cities now need to allow delivery services of marijuana by licensed non-brick and mortar dispensaries.

If access to any dispensary in California is your goal, a medical marijuana recommendation will insure you have access to dispensaries in both the state of California as well as a few other states with reciprocity: (Hawaii, Nevada, Arizona, Michigan, Maine, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New Hampshire). As time goes on, more and more dispensaries in California will convert to recreational dispensaries, but there remain several in the East Bay that continue to be strictly medical.

Cost of Your Medicine

Your medicine became more costly in 2018. With the legalization of adult-use cannabis, the city and the state increased taxes on cannabis sales at all California dispensaries and delivery services. The specific tax increases depends on your city. For example, as of 2018 Harbourside Health Center in Oakland stated taxes will increase from 14.25% to 34.25%. Currently, in Berkeley, taxes are at 27.5% for all marijuana purchases.

Proposition 64 exempts medical marijuana patients with a valid medical marijuana recommendation and a county-issued State card from a portion of these sales taxes (9.5% in Berkeley).

If you spend about \$100/month or more on cannabis products, it is worth your while to obtain a medical marijuana recommendation from Naturally Healing MD and then the county-issued State card. The State card cost is \$100 (\$50 for MediCal patients).

To help patients obtain the State card, Naturally Healing MD has scouted out the process and developed a packet to help patients complete the process. The State Card packet is available at the office and includes a guide to the process, the application you must complete in advance, and telephone numbers for the county facilities issuing the State card.

The State card also provides extra protection if you are challenged by law enforcement for possessing, growing, or transporting personal use cannabis within the limits authorized by California's law. It is the only form of identification California police are authorized to accept as confirmation of a valid medical marijuana recommendation.

A State card is also accepted at all California dispensaries as proof of status as a medical marijuana patient.

For more information on your legal rights under proposition 215, I recommend you visit this website:

www.canorml.org

Naturally Healing MD cannot offer legal advice. However, we update current patients on important changes relevant to medical marijuana in the state of California through email.

Many patients think that they need a "card " from the physician providing the medical marijuana recommendation. However, a physician-issued card is simply a convenient way to carry your medical marijuana recommendation around in a wallet (for the purpose of gaining entry to medical marijuana dispensaries) . IT IS NOT THE STATE CARD, which only the county can provide. However, if you prefer the convenience of having your medical marijuana recommendation on a wallet size card, Naturally Healing MD can make you a "card" for an additional \$15.

Obtaining your Medicine

Throughout California, there are "dispensaries" that provide patients with medical marijuana products. Some dispensaries are "brick and mortar" operations and have a physical store you can go to; other dispensaries are only delivery services, without a storefront.

You can find some (not all) dispensaries listed at:

www.weedmaps.com

www.leafly.com

Be aware that dispensaries pay for these listings and their relative prominence on these sites. If a dispensary is not listed at the site(s), it may be simply to save money. There are price differences amongst dispensaries on the same product. Shopping around is recommended once you determine which product(s) works best for you.

With your recommendation, you can use any dispensary in California you choose. Those dispensaries serving medical marijuana patients only require that you show your current medical marijuana recommendation, along with a valid ID (usually a California Identification Card or California Driver's License, passports can also be used), to the dispensary. Naturally Healing MD recommendations are internet verifiable, so the dispensary can check the validity of your recommendations 24 hours a day.

Price, products, and "ambiance" do vary from place to place. I believe that high quality, reliable products, can be purchased in the Bay Area, although most products are recreational and not useful for medical purposes.

Beginning to Use Medical Marijuana

Naturally Healing MD is a unique service that is designed to offer patients the support they need to begin to safely use cannabis. That advice includes how to administer the medication (modes of administration include: inhalation, sublingual, edible, and topical), starting dosage, and frequency.

Unlike getting a prescription for a pill, where you simply go to a pharmacy, pick it up, and pop it in, YOU choose your product(s) at the dispensary. And

there are many to choose from. There are tens of thousands of products currently. And the market is rapidly growing.

The choice of what to use and how to use it is ultimately in YOUR hands. Therefore, you need to learn the basics, so you can make good choices. The purpose of this guide is to introduce you to the different choices IN ADVANCE of your appointment.

If you have signed up for the **First Timer's Package**, you will receive a treatment plan, complete with specific product(s) recommendations, starting dose and frequency.

The Four Ways to Administer Marijuana

There are four ways to administer cannabis - through the lungs, through the oral cavity/mouth, through the stomach, and through the skin. What follows is a brief synopsis of these methods and important differences.

Lungs (Inhalation)

There are three ways to "inhale" marijuana:

Combustion (Smoking) Marijuana

Herb Vaporizing

Concentrate (or distillate) Vaporizing (also known as "Pen Vaporizers")

Combustion (Smoking) of marijuana is typically done with a pipe, bong, or "joint." It entails lighting the marijuana with a flame.

Herb Vaporizing entails heating up marijuana with a heating device - a vaporizer. There are no flames entailed.

With inhalation, the effects begin within seconds.

Pen vaporizers are a trendy and discrete way to inhale cannabis oil. However, the safety of inhaled concentrates has not been established, common additives to cannabis oils are known carcinogens (such as Propylene Glycol (PG) and polyethylene glycol (PEG)) and until large groups of pen vaporizing patients are followed long term - 10+ years - the health impact of this form of administration cannot be known.

There are long term studies examining the safety of smoking marijuana and the results of those studies strongly suggest that combusting the flower is safe. A small number of smokers get a cough and increased phlegm, which can be prevented with the use of an herb vaporizer.

Given the susceptibility of lung tissue to carcinogenic changes, I cannot recommend inhaling manufactured Cannabis distillates for which there is no safety data. For the sake of the many thousands of people who are currently using pen vaporizers, I hope it is safe. But they should know: THERE ARE NO STUDIES DEMONSTRATING PEN VAPORIZER'S LONG TERM SAFETY. I recommend waiting for safety data before trying this method. In addition, concentrates are often HIGHLY concentrated. Dose can be difficult to control. One more reason Pen Vaporizers are not a good starting method for new patients.

Oral Cavity (Sublingual)

The oral cavity - primarily underneath the tongue - has many arteries and veins. A properly designed product can be well absorbed underneath your tongue. Sublingual (under the tongue) products currently on the market include:

- Sprays
- Drops
- Strips
- Tabs

There are lots of similarities between sublingual usage and inhalation. The effects of sublinguals are usually felt shortly after usage (within minutes,

though, not seconds), start wearing off in 2 hours, and are appreciably gone after 4 hours. Inevitably, a small amount of sublingual product is swallowed and goes the edible route. Sometimes, this can be beneficial. Rarely is it problematic.

There are far fewer sublingual products on the market than 'buds' (the marijuana flower). And, per dose, they are more expensive. However, over time, I expect prices of sublinguals to drop as the market settles out. For patients who are not currently "inhaling " marijuana, sublingual products are the easiest and safest way to begin cannabis use.

Stomach (Edible or Ingested)

Marijuana products that are swallowed - also called edibles - for absorption through your stomach can have an EXTREMELY different effect than inhaled or sublingual products. In my experience, this is where patients can get into "trouble." AND MANY PATIENTS HAVE GOTTEN INTO TROUBLE because of edible products.

After an edible product (e.g., cookies, candy, drink, swallowed tincture, tab, or pill) is consumed, it lands in the stomach, where it mingles with other recently ingested items. It can remain in the stomach for up to five hours before it is absorbed. But before it is absorbed into your bloodstream (where it is then delivered to the rest of your body for its medicinal effects) , it is metabolized by the liver. How quickly the product is metabolized by the liver and sent into the bloodstream depends on the contents it intermingles with in the stomach, as well as individual variation. Herein lies one of the problems: time of onset.

Patients who ingest cannabis-containing products may unwittingly assume that, after some time has passed with little to no effect, they have not taken an adequate dose of cannabis. They then consume more product. If they end up consuming more than what they need, patients may feel "stoned" several hours later and remain so up to nine or more hours after the last dose.

Further complicating matters, the metabolism of cannabis by the liver creates a product different from what enters your bloodstream when you inhale or absorb sublingually. The liver turns THC into a longer-acting, more sedating, and more psychoactive substance than the inhaled or sublingual THC that enters your bloodstream. This is unlike the inhaled or sublingually administered product, that directly enter the bloodstream, and is shorter acting, less psychoactive, and less sedating. Therefore, the effect of edible products is different from the effects of inhaled or sublingually administered product.

Ingested products are rarely my first recommendation for initiating cannabis use. Typically, I advise starting with other forms of administration, and reserve ingested products for patients who have not found success through other modes of administration or those who need to supplement their other forms of administration.

On some occasions, when patients are looking for a product to kick in while they are asleep, edible products, with their delayed onset, might be appropriate. For those needing help falling asleep and staying asleep, a product that you suck on (like a lollipop or chew) can produce both sublingual effects that are more immediate and edible effects - from swallowing the product - that are more delayed.

For those patients relying on ingested products, they are most effective when taken at about the same time every day and coordinated with eating/ drinking times. Tinctures or liquids are most readily absorbed. Solid products, like cookies and brownies, might have unevenly distributed ingredients, complicating the effect of each bite. However, new regulatory requirements mandate consistency and manufacturers are striving for uniformity of dosage of cannabis in their product.

CBD only products, if they are THC-free, do not have psychoactive effects when ingested. Therefore, as long as the product is lab tested and has been verified to have little to no THC, edible CBD products (including pills) can be

ingested without risk of adverse psychological consequences. However, there are very few CBD products that have near zero THC.

CBD manufactured from hemp is usually pooled from multiple sources that may be contaminated with heavy metals, in addition to pesticides. This is an on-going concern and I currently do not recommend Hemp-based CBD unless it is lab tested.

Skin (Topical)

There is very little scientific literature on topical application of medical marijuana. Currently there are two types of products applied to the skin: liquids (lotion/oil/cream) and patches.

Liquids are only appropriate for a localized condition - such as highly localized neck pain, joints in the hands or feet. It is important that patients buy lab-tested products, to ensure there is cannabis in the product. If you buy CBD creams outside of a dispensary, ensure that they too are lab tested. And start with a small area of usage, ensuring that there is no allergic reaction, before using the product more liberally. To have maximum benefit topical products should have a cannabis concentration of 4% or more.

Transdermal patches are the newest form of administration of cannabis. The product is applied to the skin and the ingredients are slowly absorbed into the body's bloodstream. Because the product is new, scientific data on their effectiveness is lacking. However, several Naturally Healing MD patients have found them to be effective (and expensive).

Marijuana Strains

There are two different strains of marijuana - Indica and Sativa. They differ genetically. Indicas are more relaxing and Sativas are more stimulating.

Hybrids are mixtures of Indicas and Sativas. In general, patients wishing to be "actively engaged in activities" (housecleaning, cooking, reading, etc) should

be using a Sativa or Sativa-dominant hybrid. Those wishing to go to sleep, or physically relax, should be using an Indica or Indica-dominant strain. Many patients use a Sativa or Sativa-dominant strain during the day and an Indica or Indica-dominant strain at night.

The Indica/Sativa distinction has become outdated. Once terpene testing is widespread, the Indica/Sativa distinction will be replaced by a more detailed lab analysis that will characterize the terpenes present in the product. Eventually, strains will become "Chemovars" - identified by their distinctive distribution of terpenes, cannabinoids, and possibly flavinoids. That day has not yet arrived.

Marijuana's Active Ingredients

There are about 500 different components in marijuana that have been identified. The two most researched components are THC and CBD.

THC is the psychoactive substance in marijuana. Taken in appropriate quantities, it helps with many symptoms (e.g., pain and sleeplessness). Taken in high quantities, it results in an alteration of consciousness that some find pleasant and some find unpleasant. Taken in even higher quantities, THC can produce anxiety. Patients do not need to use high quantities of THC or feel "stoned" to get the medicinal effects of cannabis.

CBD is non-psychoactive. It also reduces the psychoactivity of THC. CBD has been found to reduce pain, anxiety, muscle spasm, nausea and loss of appetite, depression, and helps counteract the effect of THC on short-term memory.

Short-term memory loss is a well-documented side effect of THC - you do not remember as much while you are under the influence of THC as when you are not (although small dose marijuana has not been well studied). However, CBD in small quantities used either with or before THC use counteracts this effect.

As lab testing and research becomes more extensive, more information on the effect of other ingredients, like Terpenes, will become available, helping patients make appropriate Chemovar choices.

Dose and Frequency

The key to using marijuana effectively is finding the right strain, taking the right dose, and using it at the correct frequency. I always recommend starting low and gradually increasing the dose until finding what you need to get the desired effect. Below are starting doses I recommend for most patients. However, my recommendations vary according to a patient's history.

For patients that describe themselves as highly sensitive to medications, I recommend much lower starting doses.

Starting Dose

Inhalation: 1mg THC
1mg CBD

Sublingual: 1.25 mg THC
2.5 mg CBD

Edible: 2.5 mg THC
2.5 mg CBD

Frequency

Frequency depends on the symptom being treated. For example, chronic pain that is experienced all day and perhaps all night, usually is treated with multiple doses of marijuana (e.g., four times a day) or longer acting edibles, while other symptoms, like sleeplessness, requires only one dose.

In general, the effects of inhaled and sublingual marijuana are about four hours. CBD prolongs the effect of THC. THC taken through edible products can remain active for nine or more hours.

Keep a Diary

To track the effect of the medicine on your health, it is highly recommended you keep a diary.

The format for each entry is:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Intention: (like read, make decision, clean, stretch, sleep) _____

Symptom Level (like anxiety, pain, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least and 5 the most) _____

Product or Strain Used (like the name of the flower "Harlequin", or the name of the Product like Care By Design Sublingual Spray) _____

Dose: (e.g. number of sprays or spoons of flower) _____

Set a timer for two hours (unless you are going to sleep) and when it goes off, answer the following questions:

Intention Achieved? Yes _____ No _____

If yes: Enjoyed? Yes _____ No _____

Symptom level: _____

Adjusting the Dose

With "Cannabis-Naive" patients, there are three phases I recommend for starting cannabis: initiation, titration, and maintenance. Naturally Healing MD's Treatment Plan, provided for patients who sign-up for the First Timer's Package, gives specific instructions on all three of these phases, and is developed in concert with the patient's needs.

Initiation is to introduce your body to Cannabis. It is typically a small dose, begun when there are no responsibilities for the day - like driving, work, childcare, etc - which is usually in the evening and sometimes during the weekend. This initiation phase is often three days long and the dose may have no appreciable effect.

After initiation, the dose is titrated up. The duration of the titration process is anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Once you have titrated to the desired level, I typically recommend giving the product and the dose one additional week before assessing for the need for further changes.

How much CBD and how much THC you need to achieve symptom control is highly individualized. It depends on a number of factors, including the genetics of your cannabis receptors, the mode of delivery, previous experience, mindset, and context. So the right dose for you might be very different than the right dose for another with the same symptom.

The effective range per dose for the three most common symptoms I have worked with over the years are:

Anxiety: 1 - 3mg CBD inhaled or sublingual - three to four times a day.

Insomnia: 1-10mg THC inhaled or sublingual - once a day

(For those who find CBD relaxing and useful for sleep, 3mg-5mg of CBD)

(For those who experience a hang-over effect from using THC for sleep, add 1-3 mg of CBD to the THC dose)

Pain: 1.5 - 6mg CBD inhaled or sublingual + 1.5-6mg THC inhaled or sublingual - three times a day

5-20mg CBD edible and 5-20mg THC edible - once or twice a day

Remember: some will need more and some will need less for effective relief. The RIGHT dose is the one that works for YOU!

For experienced users who are actively using high quantities of THC (20mg/day or more), I typically recommend they consider abstinence for about a week before beginning a new treatment regiment. This approach serves multiple purposes and begins a new approach to a more effective deployment of Cannabis.

Medication Management

There are many different options with Cannabis - different components to manipulate, varying forms of administration, tens of thousands of products - and helping you adjust your medication to better meet your needs is one way Naturally Healing MD is trying to make Cannabis more accessible as an effective medicine.

With so many options, patients should not be deterred if their initial foray into Cannabis does not result in unmitigated success. Good news is that more than 90% of patients who follow-up with Naturally Healing MD six months after being initially seen, have found adequate symptom relief from at least one significant symptom(e.g., pain, anxiety, insomnia, or depression). Many find that relief in just one or two visits.

On-going Medication Management appointments are offered to help you find the dose that works for you!

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

It is easy to get a "medical recommendation" from a physician. Figuring out how to use marijuana effectively to treat your medical symptoms is the hard part. Most patients new to marijuana expect that one visit to get their recommendation and one visit to the dispensary to get their product is all they need to get the relief they seek. This expectation is misguided. While Cannabis is an extraordinarily versatile and effective medication, it is also extraordinarily complex. And harnessing that complexity to match the needs of a person takes time. Naturally Healing MD is likely to save you time and money by providing expert guidance.

Don't be scared! Many older adults have had one or more bad experiences with marijuana back in "the day." If that is you: you need not have another one. If you follow the treatment plan provided in your First Timer's Package, your journey should be a peaceful one, without the drama so many fear.

For that reason, I highly recommend that Cannabis naive patients schedule for a First Timer's Package. These appointments provide written recommendations for initiating, titrating, and maintaining cannabis doses for relieving the symptom you want to focus on first.

Choose that symptom you want to focus on first. It is not uncommon for patients to come to Naturally Healing MD with a list of symptoms that looks like this: Insomnia, back ache, stress, neck pain, g.i. problems, depression. While cannabis may be of help for all, to start you must have a singleminded focus. And oftentimes, success with one symptom, significantly improves others. Anxiety reduction through cannabis use often reduces pain, depression and improves sleep, for example. Which one is most important to you to address first?

Since every product does not work for every person, the First Timer's Package provides a free follow-up appointment to assess progress. If you are not getting satisfactory relief from your cannabis, this is an opportunity to alter the dosing or change the product.

Finally, I have worked with over 10,000 patients and what I have learned is that marijuana is an enormously versatile and effective medication for some

of the most common problems encountered in medical care, including pain, anxiety, insomnia, and depression. To harness its medicinal properties, it is best if patients LEARN about the medicine, experience how their body reacts to it, and make adjustments accordingly. I suggest patients look at this process as a journey and Naturally Healing MD - and its educational resources, individualized treatment plans, on-going support, and free classes - as your guide.