



Frequently Asked Questions About Medical Marijuana

Please Support Medical Marijuana in Connecticut by Supporting House Bill 6715

Does Medical Research Support Medical Marijuana?

Yes • The Congressionally chartered Institute of Medicine's (IOM) comprehensive 1999 report on the efficacy of marijuana found:

- "The accumulated data indicate a potential therapeutic value for cannabinoid drugs, particularly for symptoms such as pain relief, control of nausea and vomiting, and appetite stimulation."
- The study team found substantial consensus among experts in the relevant disciplines on scientific evidence about potential medical uses of marijuana.
- "Nausea, appetite loss, pain and anxiety . . . all can be mitigated by marijuana."

Does Allowing Medical Use of Marijuana Increase Overall Use?

No • According to the 1999 Institute of Medicine report, "There is a broad social concern that sanctioning the medical use of marijuana might increase its use among the general population. At this point there are no convincing data to support this concern. The existing data are consistent with the idea that this would not be a problem if the medical use of marijuana were as closely regulated as other medications with abuse potential . . . No evidence suggests that the use of opiates or cocaine for medical purposes has increased the perception that their illicit use is safe or acceptable."

Do Medical and Professional Organizations Support Medical Marijuana?

Yes • Some of the supporters of medical use of marijuana include, Connecticut Nurses Association, Institute of Medicine, American Public Health Association, American Society of Addiction Medicine, AIDS Action Council, California Academy of Family Physicians, Colorado Nurses Association, Consumer Reports Magazine, Kaiser Permanente, Lymphoma Foundation of America, National Lawyers Guild, and the National Nurses Society on Addiction.

Does the Public Support Allowing Access to Medical Marijuana?

Yes • A 2004 poll conducted by the University of Connecticut Center for Survey and Research Analysis found that 83% of respondents support allowing access to medical marijuana. A 2002 CNN/Time poll found that 80% of Americans support allowing seriously ill patients access to medical marijuana. A 2004 poll by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) found 72% support for allowing access to medical marijuana.



Frequently Asked Questions About Medical Marijuana (cont.)

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Aren't there other medications such as Marinol that work just as well?

No • Marinol is an oral medication that contains many components of marijuana and is currently available by prescription. However, it is not a viable solution for many patients. Research has shown that Marinol is often poorly absorbed and patients complain that dosage is hard to monitor and control. Marinol is also more psychoactive than marijuana, and thus many patients have trouble with the intoxication effect. The bottom line in practice is that for many patients suffering from symptoms of cancer, AIDS and other serious illnesses, only marijuana offers relief and significantly improves their quality of life. For many patients, marijuana also has fewer side effects than other heavy pain and nausea medications.

What Effect Does the Recent United States Supreme Court Decision Have on States' Ability to Pass Medical Marijuana legislation?

• In June of 2005, the United States Supreme Court issued a ruling in Gonzales v. Raich, which held that the federal government has the power to prosecute medical marijuana patients in states which have laws allowing the use of medical marijuana. This does not mean that the medical marijuana laws already passed in states are invalid or that other states may not pass medical marijuana laws. It only means that the federal government retains the power to prosecute such patients under federal law. States can still pass laws to protect medical marijuana patients, their caregivers, and doctors from state prosecution. Because 99% of all marijuana arrest are made under state law, rather than federal law, a state medical marijuana law would have the practical effect of protecting the vast majority of medical marijuana patients from arrest.

Does Allowing the Medical Use of Marijuana Send the Wrong Message to Our Children?

No • In states allowing medicinal use of marijuana, recreational use among youth has not increased. In fact, a recent study of trends in teen marijuana use in states with medical marijuana laws found that every state has actually experienced an overall decline in youth marijuana use since their respective laws were enacted.[i] According to the California Student Survey, since the passage of medical marijuana legislation in California, use among eleventh graders dropped by 21%; use among ninth graders dropped 44%; and use among seventh graders dropped 34%.[ii] These findings strongly indicate that medical marijuana laws actually contribute to a decrease in marijuana use amongst young people.

[i] Karen O'Keefe and Mitch Earlywine, "Marijuana Use by Young People: The Impact of State Medical Marijuana Laws," <http://www.mpp.org/pdf/2005TeenUseReport.pdf>.

[ii] California State Attorney General, "10th Biennial California Student Survey Highlights," State of California, Department of Justice. (2004).