

# Cannabis and Health

## Information and Message Points

### What is the Let's Talk Cannabis campaign?

- The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) mission is to protect and promote the health of all Californians. We are committed to increasing awareness about cannabis use and how it affects our bodies, minds and most importantly, health.
- Since there are known risks of cannabis use to youth and pregnant and breastfeeding women, CDPH developed the campaign, "Let's Talk Cannabis", using available scientific research to inform the public of these risks related to cannabis use as well as the current laws in California.
- The campaign includes a website with resources for Californians to find science-based, factual information about cannabis and its effects on their health.
- The site will help inform Californians about what is legal, what is not legal, the responsible use of cannabis, and the potential risks of cannabis use.
- It also provides specific guidance for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, youth, parents and mentors, and health care providers.

### What is the goal of the Let's Talk Cannabis campaign?

- CDPH wants all Californians to know the scientific reasons for restricting sales of cannabis to minors, the penalties for violating those restrictions, and the potential harms of overusing cannabis.
- We are working to dispel the misconception that cannabis use is not as harmful as other substances (drugs, alcohol, tobacco), especially among youth. People have used cannabis for a long time and there appear to be many deeply engrained, preconceived ideas about the risks of cannabis use or lack thereof.
- We acknowledge that perception of risk may be challenging to address, but we are confident in our messaging, especially as we learn more about cannabis and its potential negative effects on long-term, mental and physical health.

### Are there public health concerns related to the use and consumption of cannabis?

- Since cannabis is still illegal under federal law, there is very limited research about long-term health effects of moderate or prolonged use.
- Additionally, most of the research that has been done uses a type of cannabis that is not reflective of the product on the market today.
- The cannabis available today has much higher tetrahydrocannabinol (commonly referred to as THC) concentrations than cannabis from years ago. We have significant concerns about the unknown effects of the higher THC concentrations as well as the new and various methods and modes of use.
- Cannabis research among users can often be complicated by co-use or the need to tease out the effects of cannabis from other substances.



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- There are a lot of myths about the effects of cannabis use on the skills necessary for driving. While evidence suggests cannabis negatively impacts reaction time and concentration, many people believe they are safer driving under the influence of cannabis than they are alcohol.
- There are very real health concerns, and these concerns are greatest for our vulnerable populations, like pregnant and breastfeeding women and young people.
- A specific concern is the potential for overconsumption of edibles because of the delayed effects, particularly among novice users. Another concern is the potential for accidental ingestion and poisoning of children.
- For pregnant and breastfeeding women, we want to discourage and delay cannabis use. We know THC passes to the fetus through the placenta and to infants through breast milk.
- We want to prevent and delay cannabis use among youth because their brains are still developing.

### Is it safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women to use cannabis?

- There are a lot of unknowns when it comes to cannabis use, but we do know that cannabis passes from mother to baby three ways: through the bloodstream into the placenta, through breastmilk, and through secondhand smoke that enters a baby's lungs.
- For pregnant and breastfeeding women, and for women who plan to become pregnant soon, leading doctors' organizations (e.g., ACOG and AAP) recommend discontinuing use of cannabis.
- Research shows that if you use cannabis while you are pregnant or breastfeeding, your baby may be born with a lower birth weight, which means the baby is more likely to have health problems, especially in the first year of life.

### Why is the sale of cannabis (non-medicinal) restricted for youth under 21?

- The brains of young people do not fully develop until they reach their mid-20s. Regular cannabis use during the early years of life can lead to harmful physical changes in the brain.
- Research shows that cannabis use can harm the memory, learning, and attention of youth. Some studies suggest a permanent impact as well.
- Using cannabis as a teen also increases the risk of cannabis dependence and a higher risk for using or abusing other substances and illegal drugs.
- Regular cannabis use has been linked to anxiety, depression, suicide, and schizophrenia especially for teens with a family history of mental illness.
- Cannabis affects children more strongly than adults. Children are at higher risk for poisoning from cannabis, especially with edibles.



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### What is the public health stance on adult use?

- Cannabis is now legal in California for adults 21 and over, but we do not want individuals to assume that legal always means safe.
- Smoke from cannabis contains many of the same toxins and chemicals found in tobacco smoke, and inhaling it can increase the risk of develop lung problems.
- Cannabis can negatively affect the skills needed to drive safely, including reaction time, coordination, and concentration.
- Depending on the method used, the effects of cannabis can be felt right away or take several hours.
- Edibles may have higher concentrations of THC and if overconsumed may put people at risk for poisoning. We want consumers who have never tried edibles to be careful—not too much, too fast.
- Dabbing can result in a very fast, very intense “high” that may be difficult for novice users to manage.

### What danger does driving under the influence of cannabis pose?

- Cannabis can negatively affect the skills a person needs to drive safely, including reaction time, coordination and concentration.
- Not only does driving under the influence of cannabis increase the risk of getting into a car crash, it is illegal.
- If someone is under the influence of cannabis while operating a car, boat, or other vehicle, a law enforcement officer can pull them over and conduct a sobriety test.

### How can adults consume responsibly?

- Regardless how and when a person uses, storing all cannabis products in a locked area is recommended. Make sure children cannot see or reach the locked area. Keep cannabis in the child-resistant packaging from the store.
- Never use cannabis around children. When someone is using cannabis, they should make sure an adult who can look after their children is nearby. Keep children safe. Children are at higher risk for poisoning from edibles.
- Secondhand smoke contains THC and other chemicals that can affect the health of children.
- If a child may have ingested cannabis, call the local Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222. If a child needs immediate medical help, call 911.
- While cannabis is legal for adults 21 and older in California, employers and landlords can set their own rules; adults should know those policies.
- The way cannabis plants are grown has changed over the past few decades. Many plants now contain higher amounts of THC. The higher the THC content, the stronger the effects on the brain and behavior.



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- High concentrations of THC are not fully understood, but can impair judgement and coordination, and lead to poisonings, car crashes and other injuries.

### Is it possible to overdose on cannabis?

- A fatal overdose is unlikely, but that doesn't mean cannabis is harmless.
- The potency of current strains (determined by the amount of THC) may lead to poisonings, particularly when eaten or swallowed.
- Also, people can and do injure themselves because of marijuana's effects on judgment, perception, movement, and coordination, and from combining with other substances like alcohol.

### Are cannabis products safe for pets?

- We are aware of cannabis products being marketed to treat diseases in pets, but the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved cannabis for use in animals and it needs to be further studied to assess the safety and effectiveness for medical use in animals.
- Protect pets. Store cannabis safely out of reach of dogs, cats, and other animals. If a pet may have eaten cannabis, call the veterinarian.

### How much does CDPH know about current cannabis use in California?

- CDPH used existing population-based surveys to establish a baseline for cannabis use in California.
- One main source of self-reported data, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, shows that 9.8% of adults over 18 years of age reported using cannabis at least one day in the past 30 days.
- The 2013-2015 California Healthy Kids Survey, a representative survey of California students, found that 5% of 7th graders, 13.4% of 9th graders, and 20.1% of 11th graders used cannabis in the past 30 days.
- There is some information on how often cannabis is consumed by youth, but no information for adults. The 2013-2015 California Healthy Kids Survey reports the frequency of cannabis use among 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students. Using three or more days per month as an indicator of frequent use, in 2013-2015, 2.8% of 7th graders, 7.6% of 9th graders, and 12.3% of 11th graders reported using cannabis three or more days in the past month.

### How is CDPH planning to collect data and information going forward about cannabis use and impacts in California?

- CDPH is developing a surveillance framework to monitor the health effects of cannabis use in California.
- To accomplish that goal we'll begin by identifying the medical and public health effects related to cannabis use that we want to monitor and determine the indicators to track these effects.



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- Some public health impacts we plan to monitor include *risk and protective factors* (e.g., social norms—attitudes, beliefs, perceptions—and exposure to cannabis marketing), *consumption* (e.g., self-reported use, sales, number and location of retail outlets) and *consequences or outcomes* (e.g., physical health conditions, substance use—abuse, treatment and recovery, mental health disorders, poisoning injuries, fatalities, and motor vehicle traffic injuries, as well as child welfare, education, and criminal justice).
- Other potential indicators to monitor include positive health impacts, regional and environmental impacts, social disparities and justice, drug seizures, and production/manufacturing toxicity.
- Additionally, we will identify existing data sources and gaps, prioritize what is needed and address any gaps.

### What are reliable existing data sources?

- Local and state health departments rely on several population-based surveys with data on youth, adult users, and pregnant and breastfeeding women, many of which have data specific to cities and counties
- These data sources currently include:
  - The Youth Risk Behavior Survey
  - California Student Tobacco Survey
  - California Healthy Kids Survey
  - National Survey on Drug Use and Health
  - Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
  - California Adult Tobacco Survey
  - Maternal and Infant Health Assessment
- Other data sources include hospital discharge data, emergency department visit data, poison control centers, motor vehicle crash reports, and state and local data sources on education, substance use treatment data and publicly funded insurance programs and outcomes.

### What are the benefits of cannabis use for medicinal purposes?

- Medicinal marijuana has been legal in California since 1996 and qualified physicians can recommend the use of medical marijuana for medical conditions listed in the Medicinal and Adult Use Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act ([MAUCRSA](#)).
- However, CDPH has not conducted any independent study of the medical benefits of cannabis and cannot speak with authority on the subject.



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### **On Jan. 2, when the state begins issuing licenses for the sale of medicinal cannabis, will buyers have to show a Medical Marijuana ID Card?**

- No. In order to buy medicinal cannabis, a person must have either a valid physician's recommendation, a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, or be a Primary Caregiver with a valid physician's recommendation for the patient.
- If a person has a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, they do not have to pay sales tax on medicinal cannabis products, but other taxes may apply.

### **Who can get a Medical Marijuana ID Card?**

- Individuals must be 18 or older and have either a valid physician's recommendation or be a Primary Caregiver with a valid physician's recommendation for the patient.

### **What are the qualifying conditions for medicinal use cannabis?**

- A person can obtain a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card if they have one or more of the following medical conditions:
  - Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)
  - Anorexia
  - Arthritis
  - Cachexia
  - Cancer
  - Chronic pain
  - Glaucoma
  - Migraine
  - Severe nausea
  - Persistent muscle spasms, including, but not limited to, spasms associated with multiple sclerosis.
  - Seizures, including, but not limited to, seizures associated with epilepsy
  - Any other chronic or persistent medical symptom that either:
    - Substantially limits your ability to conduct one or more major life activities as defined in the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336).
    - If not alleviated, may cause serious harm to an individual's safety or physical or mental health.

### **Does the medical condition need to be documented?**

- Yes, the patient must provide written documentation by the attending physician stating that the person has been diagnosed with a medical condition and the medicinal use of cannabis is appropriate.



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### Does a patient meet face-to-face with a physician to get a medical marijuana ID card?

- Counties can develop their own protocols and they may vary by county.
- The Medical Board of California is developing guidance on this issue, which is [available on their website](#).



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# Commercial Cannabis FAQs

## Information about State Licensing and Regulation

### What is now legal in California for the commercial cannabis industry?

- Medical marijuana has been legal in California for more than 20 years under the Compassionate Use Act. In 2015, three bills were passed in the legislature to initiate regulations around this existing industry.
- In November 2016, voters passed Proposition 64, legalizing cannabis for adult use.
- The Medicinal and Adult-Use Cannabis Regulations and Safety Act (MAUCRSA), signed into law in June 2017, harmonized statutory requirements for both the medicinal and adult-use cannabis markets and created one regulatory framework governing both types of use.
- Beginning January 1, 2018, a state license is required to engage in commercial cannabis activity pursuant to MAUCRSA.
- The state will be issuing annual licenses to:
  - Cultivators – Grow, harvest, and process cannabis flower.
  - Manufacturers – Make products containing cannabis.
  - Retailers – Sell cannabis and cannabis products to customers, often referred to as dispensaries.
  - Distributors – Transport cannabis and cannabis products, arrange for testing, check for appropriate packaging and labeling, collect taxes, and may act as a wholesaler.
  - Testing Laboratories – Test cannabis and cannabis products.
  - Microbusinesses – May act as a retailer, distributor, manufacturer, and/or cultivator, and must perform three (3) of the four (4) permissible activities.

### Who is responsible for licensing and regulating the cannabis industry?

- The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CalCannabis) licenses cultivators and maintains a track-and-trace system to record to movement of plant from seed to sale. For more information on CDFA licensing and [regulations](#), visit their website: <http://calcannabis.cdfa.ca.gov/>
- The Bureau of Cannabis Control (BCC or Bureau) licenses retailers, distributors, testing laboratories and microbusinesses. For more information on BCC licensing and [regulations](#), visit their website: <http://bcc.ca.gov/>
- The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) licenses manufacturers of cannabis products (e.g. edibles, tinctures and topicals) and regulates the packaging and labeling of cannabis products. For more information on CDPH licensing and [regulations](#), visit their website: <http://cdph.ca.gov/mcsb>



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### How does the licensing system work?

- Proposition 64 set forth a two-tiered licensing system in which both the state and local jurisdictions participate in setting licensing requirements and safeguards.
- State laws and regulations provide the basic rules every commercial cannabis business must follow. MAUCRSA then allows local governments to set the same or stricter standards. They may allow all commercial cannabis activity, certain activity or ban all activity within their jurisdiction.
- If they choose to allow, then local jurisdictions can determine eligibility, size of operations, density of number of operations, and other requirements.
- A state licensing authority cannot issue a state license to a business within a city or county which has banned the commercial cannabis activity.
- Before issuing a license, the state authorities will confirm with the local jurisdiction that issuing the license would not violate any local ordinance or regulation.

### Will the state be ready to issue licenses beginning January 1, 2018?

- State licensing authorities are accepting temporary license applications and have begun issuing licenses.
- Once approved, temporary licenses will have effective dates beginning January 1, 2018 and will be effective for 120 days, with the option to extend for 90-day periods, if the business has submitted a complete annual license application.
- **Temporary license applications must include authorization to conduct commercial cannabis activity from the city or county where the business' manufacturing premises is located.**
- CDPH's temporary license application for commercial cannabis manufacturing is available on our website, [www.cdph.ca.gov/mcsb](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/mcsb).
- Parties interested in applying for a commercial cannabis license for cultivation should go to the Cal Cannabis website: <http://calcannabis.cdpha.ca.gov>
- Parties interested in applying for a commercial cannabis license for retail, distribution, testing or microbusinesses should go to the Bureau: <http://www.bcc.ca.gov/>
- We encourage you to visit the state cannabis portal (<https://cannabis.ca.gov>) for additional licensing and regulatory information and updates

### What are cannabis packaging and labeling requirements?

- Cannabis product packaging must be child-resistant, tamper-evident, and resealable if it contains more than one serving, cannot be attractive to children, and must include appropriate tracking, warning and consumer information labeling.
- In addition to these statutory requirements, CDPH has issued further requirements for manufactured cannabis products: Cannabis product packaging cannot resemble traditionally available food packages, and edible packaging must be opaque. All



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manufactured products must be packaged before they are released to a distributor (if the next step is a retailer). The label may not refer to the product as candy.

- Businesses must follow good manufacturing practices to ensure the processes they use and products they create are safe. Products cannot be infused with nicotine or alcohol or have added caffeine.
- The amount of THC in edibles will be limited to 10 milligrams per serving and 100 milligrams per package. All products will be tested by a third-party laboratory to ensure they are free of contaminants and do not exceed THC limits.

### Are there requirements in place to ensure public safety?

- Cannabis businesses cannot be within 600 feet of a school providing instruction to children from kindergarten through 12th grade, a day care, or youth center, unless permitted by the local jurisdiction. All retail licensees who sell cannabis to customers and patients must have on-site security personnel, surveillance cameras, commercial grade locks, and limited-access areas where cannabis is stored.
- Delivery of medicinal or adult-use cannabis and cannabis products may only be performed by a retailer's direct employee to a physical location and the customer must sign for the purchase at the time of delivery.
- Cannabis and cannabis products will be monitored by a track-and-trace system, which is a unique identifier tagging and inventory system designed to monitor the flow of product as it moves through the supply chain. All licensees are required to use the track-and-trace system.
- State and/or local agency staff will be conducting site inspections routinely and at any time as deemed necessary.
- Inspections are intended to determine overall compliance with operational, safety, reporting and recordkeeping requirements. Inspectors will also audit records, respond to complaints, inspect incoming or outgoing shipments and more.
- Both medicinal and adult-use cannabis and cannabis products will be tested by a licensed third-party testing laboratory to ensure they are free of contaminants and do not exceed THC limits prior to being sold to the public by a retailer.

### What are the cannabis purchase and usage limits?

- If you are 21 and older, you can buy and possess up to one ounce (28.5 grams) of cannabis and up to eight grams of concentrated cannabis. You can also plant, harvest, dry, and process up to six cannabis plants inside of your private residence or on the grounds of your private residence.
- Under California's Compassionate Use Act and Medical Marijuana Program, if you have a valid physician's recommendation or a valid county issued medical marijuana identification card you can use and possess up to eight ounces of dried medicinal cannabis and six



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mature cannabis plants (or 12 immature plants). You can possess a larger quantity of medicinal cannabis if your physician's recommendation specifies a higher amount.

- You can use cannabis on private property, but you cannot use, smoke, eat, or vape cannabis in public places and you cannot smoke cannabis or cannabis products in places where it is illegal to smoke tobacco.
- Property owners may ban the use and possession of cannabis on their privately owned properties.
- You cannot use cannabis within 1,000 feet of a school, day care center, or youth center while children are present.
- Even though it is legal under California law, you cannot consume or possess cannabis on federal lands like national parks, even if the park is in California.
- It is illegal to take your cannabis across state lines, even if you are traveling to another state where cannabis is legal.
- Driving under the influence of cannabis is illegal and a law enforcement officer can conduct a sobriety test if impairment is suspected
- Having an open container of cannabis in a vehicle while driving or riding in the passenger seat is illegal. It must be in an approved sealed package or container or kept in the trunk of the vehicle.

### **Are the purchase rules the same for people with medical marijuana identification cards?**

- Under California's Compassionate Use Act and Medical Marijuana Program, if you have a valid physician's recommendation or a valid county issued medical marijuana identification card you can use and possess up to eight ounces of dried medicinal cannabis and six mature cannabis plants (or 12 immature plants).
- You can possess a larger quantity of medicinal cannabis if your physician's recommendation specifies a higher amount.



# Media Advisory

[Insert agency or organization name here]

**CONTACT:** [Name]  
[Phone Number]  
[Date]

**What:** During a [teleconference/event/presentation], [organization or agency] officials will share information regarding the legalization of adult-use cannabis and efforts to educate the public about local ordinances and potential health effects of cannabis use.

**When:** [Date]  
[Time]

**Where:** [City]  
[Phone number or address]  
***Media only please***  
[Login or password]

**Who:** [Name]  
[Title]  
[Organization or agency]

[Name]  
[Title]  
[Organization or agency]

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COUNTY/CITY NAME