



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO  
HEALTH SYSTEM

California Cannabis Health Information Initiative

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Legal

#### 1. Can I use cannabis?

Under California law, adults 21 or older can use, carry, and grow cannabis (marijuana, weed, pot, etc.). Buying cannabis (without a valid physician's recommendation or a county-issued medical marijuana identification card) will become legal under California law for adults 21 or older on January 1, 2018.

Use of medicinal cannabis is legal under California law if you have a valid physician's recommendation or a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card. To buy medicinal cannabis, you must be 18 or older and have either a valid physician's recommendation, a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, or be a Primary Caregiver as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11362.7(d) or 11362.5(e), with a valid physician's recommendation for the patient.

For more information, visit: [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180SB94](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB94).

#### 2. What about medicinal cannabis use?

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 possess and transport up to eight ounces

of dried medicinal cannabis and six mature cannabis plants (or 12 immature plants). If you require a larger amount of cannabis, under the Compassionate Use Act, you may possess and cultivate any amount that is reasonably related to your current medical needs.

To buy medicinal cannabis, you must be 18 or older and have a valid physician's recommendation, a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, or be a Primary Caregiver as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11362.7(d).

You can only buy medicinal cannabis from retailers with a "M-license". Retailers that sell adult use cannabis will have an "A-license".

With a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, you do not have to pay sales tax when you buy cannabis, but you do have to pay other taxes.

#### 3. How much cannabis can I legally have?

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. When growing cannabis for personal use, the plants must in a locked space that is not visible to the public.



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.

#### 4. **Can I sell or give away cannabis?**

To sell cannabis, you need a license from the California Bureau of Cannabis Control. If you are 21 or older, you can give away up to one ounce (28.5 grams) of cannabis and up to eight grams of concentrated cannabis to another person 21 or older, but you cannot receive money or any form of compensation.

#### 5. **Where can I buy cannabis?**

You can only buy cannabis at retail outlets licensed by the California Bureau of Cannabis Control.

Medicinal cannabis patients can only buy from a licensed medicinal retailer.

#### 6. **Where can I use cannabis?**

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.

#### 7. **What serious medical condition(s) do I need to have in order to get a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card?**

You can obtain a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, if you have any 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 your safety or physical or mental health.

**8. Is cannabis legal in all California cities and counties?**

Cities and counties may have stricter laws about cannabis that are in addition to the state law. Know your local cannabis laws.

**9. Can I carry cannabis around with me?**

You can carry up to one ounce (28.5 grams) of cannabis and up to eight grams of concentrated cannabis.

**10. Can I carry cannabis in my car?**

It is against the law for you to have an open container of cannabis in a car or other vehicle while driving, operating or riding in the passenger seat. If you have cannabis in a vehicle, it must be in an approved sealed package or container. Otherwise, it must be kept in the trunk of the vehicle.

Even if you have a valid physician's recommendation or a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card, it is illegal to smoke cannabis in an operating vehicle.

**11. Can I get a DUI if I drive while I am high?**

Yes. If you are under the influence of cannabis while operating a car, boat, or other vehicle, a law enforcement officer can pull you over and conduct a sobriety test.

**12. What about federal law?**

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.

**13. Can I leave California with cannabis?**

No. It is illegal to take cannabis across state lines, even if you are traveling to another state where cannabis is legal.

**14. Now that cannabis is legal, can my employer prohibit me from using?**

Even though it is legal under California law, employers have the right to prohibit the use of cannabis by their employees. Know your workplace cannabis policies.

**Safe and Responsible Use**

**15. Is it true that cannabis is stronger now than it was years ago?**

Yes. The way cannabis plants are grown has changed over the past few decades. Many plants now contain higher amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in cannabis. The higher the THC content, the stronger the effects on your brain and behavior.

A higher concentration of THC may result from using newer methods of cannabis like dabbing, vaping, and/or consuming edibles.

**16. How do I store cannabis safely?**

Put cannabis away every time. Never leave it out.

Store all cannabis products where children cannot see or reach them. Keep cannabis in the child-resistant packaging from the store. You may want to consider purchasing a locked box.

Cannabis affects children more strongly than adults. Children are at higher risk for cannabis poisoning, especially from edibles.

If you think a child may have ingested cannabis, call the Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222. If you think a child needs immediate medical help, call 911.

Keep cannabis out of reach of pets too. If you think your pet may have eaten cannabis, call your veterinarian.

**17. What should I know about consuming edibles safely?**

It can take time approximately 30 minutes to two hours to feel the effects of edibles like cookies or sodas. Start with less than a single serving (less than 10 mg of THC), then wait before using more. It is important to know about the delayed effects of edibles because if you eat too much too fast, you are at higher risk of poisoning.

**18. Is it possible to overdose on cannabis?**

A fatal overdose is unlikely. However, smoking or eating high concentrations of THC can affect your judgment, perception, and coordination, and may lead to poisoning, injuries and accidents.

**19. Can secondhand cannabis smoke affect nonsmokers and children?**

Yes. Secondhand cannabis smoke contains THC and many of the same toxins and chemicals found in tobacco smoke. These toxins can be harmful to those around you, especially babies and children.

**20. Will cannabis affect my driving?**

Yes. Cannabis can negatively affect the skills you need to drive safely, including reaction time, coordination and concentration.

Driving under the influence of cannabis is illegal and increases your risk of getting into a car crash.

If you are under the influence of cannabis while operating a car, boat, or other vehicle, a law enforcement officer can pull you over and conduct a sobriety test.

**Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women**

**21. If I am pregnant, should I use cannabis to relieve nausea?**

No. Using any form of cannabis is not recommended for women who are pregnant or who plan to be pregnant soon. If you already use cannabis for medicinal purposes, ask your doctor for an alternative treatment shown to be safe during pregnancy.

Talk to your doctor about any questions you have about cannabis.

**22. Can using cannabis harm my baby while I am pregnant or breastfeeding?**

Yes. Using any form of cannabis is not recommended for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or who plan to become pregnant soon.

Research shows that if you use cannabis while you are pregnant or breastfeeding the growth and development of your baby's brain can be harmed, and your baby is more likely to be born with a lower birth weight and have health problems.

Talk to your doctor about any questions you have about cannabis.

**Youth**

**23. Is cannabis harmful to teens and young adults?**

Yes. The brain is still developing until a person

reaches their mid-20s. Using cannabis regularly in your teens and early 20s may lead to physical changes in your brain.

Cannabis can harm a young person’s memory and ability to learn and pay attention. Some studies suggest a permanent impact as well. These harmful effects may make it harder for youth to achieve their educational and professional goals and impact how successful they are in life.

Cannabis use also increases the risk for anxiety, depression, suicide and schizophrenia as well as substance use or abuse.

## 24. What happens if I am under 18 and caught carrying or using cannabis?

If you are under 18 and caught in possession of cannabis you will be required to complete drug education or counseling and community service (unless you have a valid qualifying physician’s recommendation or a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card). You could also face additional penalties (fines and jail time) depending on where you are, whether it is your second offense and other factors.

## Parents and Mentors

### 25. How should I talk to my child or teen about cannabis?

- Talk openly and provide guidance about the risks of using cannabis.
- Stay positive and focus on how using cannabis can get in the way of achieving goals.
- Set shared guidelines and expectations for healthy behaviors.
- Be aware of your own attitudes and behaviors



**LET’S TALK CANNABIS**

 <http://bit.do/letstalkcannabis>

 [letstalkcannabis@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:letstalkcannabis@cdph.ca.gov)

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