

## The good, the bad, and the unknown

It is important for cancer patients to have correct and unbiased information about cannabis (marijuana).

### The Good

- Research tells us that cannabis may help some people with nausea caused by chemotherapy after other medicines did not work.
- Some patients with cancer report that cannabis helps with symptoms, including pain, anxiety, insomnia, poor appetite, and depression, though this has not been proven.
- Cannabis access in the state of Michigan has increased.
- Doctors are becoming better informed about cannabis.

### The Bad

- Cannabis can cause side effects such as drowsiness, memory problems, hallucinations, dizziness, worsening of anxiety or depression, paranoia, and nausea/vomiting.
- About 10% of patients who use cannabis develop problematic cannabis use, known as Cannabis Use Disorder.
- We do not fully know how cannabis may impact other medications. It may make some medications used to fight cancer work less well.
- Research tells us that cannabis may cause worsening of quality of life.
- Research shows that, compared to nonusers, daily cannabis users had 25% higher odds of heart attack and 42% higher odds of stroke.
- Cannabis smoke has many of the same toxins that are in cigarette smoke and may hurt the lungs.
- Some people falsely suggest that cannabis has been shown to cure cancer. Cannabis is NOT a cure for cancer or a treatment for cancer. Patients with cancer should use treatments recommended by a cancer doctor.

### The Unknown

Relatively little research has been done on cannabis in patients with cancer. We need to know a lot more about cannabis. There may be unknown risks of cannabis use.

### If You Choose to Use Cannabis

- Tell your doctors that you are using cannabis.
- Follow cannabis laws, which vary from state to state.
- Don't smoke cannabis (products made from cannabis can be consumed by eating, drinking, placing under the tongue, applying to the skin, or inserting into the rectum.)
- Don't drive while using cannabis.
- Protect others from accidentally consuming cannabis.
- Start with a low dose of cannabis and increase the dose slowly until you either have unwanted side effects from the cannabis or the issue that you are trying to treat is improved.
- You will likely build a tolerance to cannabis with time. This means that you will have to increase your dose of cannabis to get the same effect.
- Use cannabis for symptoms of cancer or cancer treatments only after medicines backed by scientific evidence have failed.



American Cancer Society  
[www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/complementary-and-alternative-medicine/marijuana-and-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/complementary-and-alternative-medicine/marijuana-and-cancer.html)

National Cancer Institute  
<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/cam/patient/cannabis-pdq>

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center  
<https://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/integrative-medicine/herbs/cannabis>