

Medical Marijuana

Currently, the federal government categorizes marijuana as a Schedule I substance with no known medical value. Meanwhile, countless seriously ill patients are using medical marijuana with the approval of their doctors. The federal government and most state governments consider these patients criminals — subject to arrest, fines and imprisonment.

Health Facts:

- In 1999, the **National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM)** concluded that "there are some limited circumstances in which we recommend smoking marijuana for medical uses." The IOM report released that day was the result of two years of research that was **funded by the White House drug policy office**, which comprised an analysis of all existing data on marijuana's therapeutic uses.
- Marijuana has a wide range of therapeutic uses, including relieving nausea and increasing appetite, reducing muscle spasms and spasticity, and relieving chronic pain. Thousands of patients and their doctors have found marijuana to be useful in treating the symptoms of **AIDS, cancer, multiple sclerosis**, and other serious conditions. **For many people, marijuana is the only medicine that works with a suitable degree of safety and efficacy.**

Public Support:

- Since 1996, **a majority of voters in Alaska, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Maine, Nevada, Oregon, Montana and Washington** have voted in favor of ballot initiatives to remove criminal penalties for seriously ill people who grow or possess medical marijuana. Recent polls have shown that public approval of these laws has increased since they went into effect. In addition, medical marijuana laws were recently passed by the legislatures and signed into law in Hawaii, Maryland, and Vermont.
- *The Journal of Clinical Oncology* published a 1990 scientific survey of oncologists (cancer specialists), which found that 54% of those with an opinion favored the controlled medical availability of marijuana and **44% had already broken the law** by suggesting at least once that a patient obtain marijuana illegally.
- A **Pew Research** poll conducted in 2001, found that **73% of American adults** supported permitting doctors to prescribe marijuana for their patients. Over the last decade, polls have consistently shown between 60% and 80% support for legal access to medical marijuana.
- Major criminal justice and health organizations are joining the fight to protect medical marijuana patients. These groups include the **American Nurses Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Bar Association, American Medical Student Association, American Public Health Association, AIDS Action Council, Lymphoma Foundation of America, National Association of Attorneys General, National Association of People with AIDS**, and the **National Black Police Association**.

Religious Support:

- The following religious bodies have come out in favor of medical marijuana: **The Episcopal Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, Union for Reform Judaism, United Church of Christ**, and the **Progressive National Baptist Convention**.
- The following religious bodies support non-interference from the federal government in states that have medical marijuana laws: **National Council of Churches, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Presbyterian Church (USA)**, and **Religious Society of Friends (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting)**.