

## Eating Marijuana and Smoking Marijuana Are Dangerously Different

Medical Marijuana Dispensaries Will be Selling Marijuana-Laced Brownies, Cookies and Candy ... These Products Can Cause Marijuana Poisoning

*There needs to be a warning label!*

- ❑ Illinois' medical marijuana law provides for qualifying cardholders to buy medical marijuana-infused edibles. When THC is taken orally there are several significant things which happen that make it potentially unsafe and increases the chance for overdose/poisoning. (THC, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, is the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana.) The law establishes an arbitrary amount of 100 milligrams (mg) of active THC per package of marijuana-infused product. There is no scientific research that defines safe dosages of THC, hence the very real threat of overdose/poisoning.
- ❑ To understand marijuana we can look at the commercially available prescription medication, Marinol®, as a model. Marinol is an FDA approved variety of synthetic THC. Marinol comes in 2.5, 5 and 10 mg capsules. Most patients cannot tolerate anything above a 2.5 mg capsule. They may take it 4 times per day, so the most a patient may generally take is 40 mg a day.

An 8-ounce candy bar may contain 100 mg of active THC. This is 2.5 times the amount that most any physician would prescribe using the FDA approved drug, Marinol.

- ❑ A “package,” which can be a bag of cookies or a single candy bar, can contain as much as 100 milligrams of active THC, which is excessive. Ten milligrams is considered by many to be a single serving. Products using infused-marijuana butter and oil, which is concentrated marijuana, have THC levels much higher than contained in the marijuana plant. Portion sizes are problematic. A cookie can have six servings, but cookies and candy bars are usually consumed in an individual serving.  
**Standards are needed for product sizes, strength of THC in different products (retail marijuana product and retail marijuana concentrate) and regulations on portion sizes.**

**Labeling for marijuana-infused edibles is critical. The product label should include the weight of the THC, standard size and portion, and, importantly, warnings about its usage.**

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014, Colorado's Governor signed bills regulating marijuana-edibles.

- Marijuana-infused products must be recognizable outside of their packaging.
- Marijuana edibles must be manufactured in single-serving portions so that every individually wrapped cookie or brownie contains the same amount of concentrated THC.
- There must be standards for marijuana edibles which establish the retail marijuana product and retail marijuana concentrate that is equivalent to one ounce of retail marijuana.

- ❑ Product “**warnings**” should include time delay onset, being unable to control dosage, and interactions with other drugs. The onset of action for smoking marijuana is 10-15 seconds and 30-60 minutes for marijuana taken orally. Smoking gives the user an immediate sense of what they are taking and how it is affecting them. With the slow onset of action, oral users are prone to repeat or increase the dose and risk taking too much and accumulating lethal amounts of THC in the body.

- ❑ Product “**warnings**” should caution users that with higher doses of THC accumulating from repeatedly taking the slow-onset oral marijuana edibles, the risk of drug-drug interaction increases. Marijuana suppresses the vomiting reflex. The overdose/poisoning and interaction is increased since the person will not have a vomiting reflex which can be protective. (Note that on college campuses binge drinking and marijuana smoking is more dangerous than binge drinking alone.)
- ❑ Product “**warnings**” should include overdose/marijuana poisoning. High doses of THC can cause temporary symptoms of paranoia, panic, increased blood pressure, and increased heart rate. Consuming edible marijuana by individuals with underlying psychiatric or cardiac disorders can lead to overdose and serious medical harm.
- ❑ Product “**warnings**” should post dangers to children. Kids eat candy products and such use will go undetected in areas where kids congregate (schools, playgrounds, etc.). Children are attracted to sweet edibles. Additionally, smoking is a barrier to use for some children and edibles eliminate this barrier.
- ❑ Marinol “**warnings**” include:
  - Common Side Effects – appetite changes, difficulty concentrating, dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, elevated mood, irritability and vision disturbances.
  - Other Side Effects – anxiety, confusion, memory loss, nausea, stomach pain, unusual thoughts and weakness.
  - Serious Side Effects which should be addressed by a doctor – depression, hallucinations, numbness or tingling in the hands or feet, rapid heartbeat, rash, and seizures.
  - Long-Term Use Can Cause Dependency
- ❑ Marijuana “**warnings**” should also include:
  - Not operating machinery, including motor vehicles and other safety sensitive equipment.
  - Regular and extensive consumption of marijuana may impact short-term memory, coordination and ability to concentrate.
  - Use of marijuana by individuals under the age of 21 may lead to impairment of the development of the brain leading to the loss of IQ later in life.

The State of Illinois disregarded the FDA process by making marijuana available to individuals with certain medical conditions. While at the same time the State is responsible for keeping its citizens safe from harm. Recent examples of the serious effects resulting from consuming marijuana-infused edibles include:

- A California toddler ate a piece of marijuana-infused candy found on the beach; she later began to stumble and became unresponsive. Taken to a hospital pediatric intensive care unit, the toxicology report showed THC in her system.
- In Colorado, a college student ate one marijuana cookie that was intended to serve six, the potency of six high quality joints, and jumped off a fourth floor balcony. The autopsy report cited “marijuana intoxication” as a “significant contributing factor” to his death.
- A Denver woman called 911 after her husband ate some marijuana candy and started hallucinating and frightening their three children. The husband took his gun and shot and killed his wife. He was charged with first degree murder. The Karma Kandy package indicated the 10-grams of candy contained 101 milligrams of THC.

Without proper labelling, the State is subjecting its citizens to very real risks, including the risk of marijuana poisoning.

