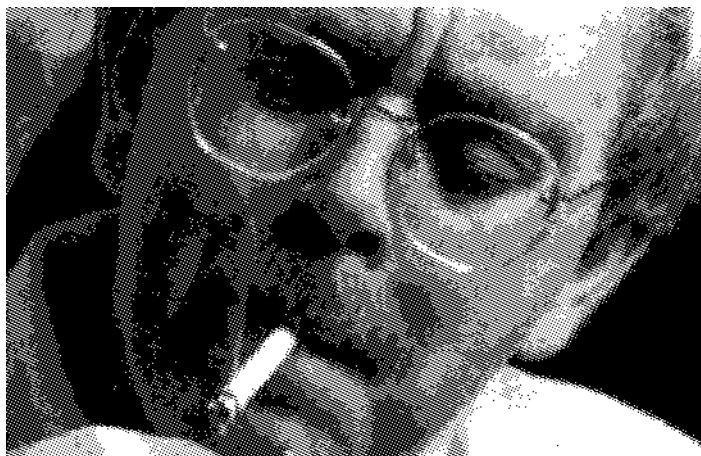




211 West Wacker Drive  
Suite 1700  
Chicago, Illinois 60606  
1-800-331-2020  
[www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org)



## MARIJUANA AND GLAUCOMA

The medical use of marijuana has led to heated public discussion. Much of the debate concerns the effectiveness of marijuana as a treatment for glaucoma. Many people with glaucoma may be curious about marijuana. Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

### **How can marijuana be used to treat glaucoma?**

Glaucoma is an eye disease that damages the optic nerve resulting in a gradual loss of vision. Glaucoma is often linked with elevated pressure inside the eye. This pressure may cause the loss of vision. There is evidence that marijuana, swallowed or smoked, can lower the pressure in the eye.

### **Are there side effects or bad reactions from taking marijuana to treat glaucoma?**

Marijuana can cause euphoria, or a “high.” This can be a dangerous side effect that impairs your ability to drive, operate machinery, or perform other tasks. Studies

report that blood pressure falls as the eye pressure lowers. This might reduce the blood flow to the optic nerve. Dry eye and redness are other side effects.

### **What are the long-term side effects of using marijuana as a treatment for glaucoma?**

There are no published studies on long-term marijuana use for glaucoma. The long-term effects of this treatment are unknown.

### **Are there any advantages to using marijuana to treat glaucoma instead of other medications?**

Marijuana has no known advantages over modern glaucoma treatments. Traditional drugs used for glaucoma have been proven safe and effective through research, while marijuana has not. Most glaucoma drugs have less troubling side effects. Many glaucoma drugs are easier to use—some with an eye dropper, and some in dosages of only twice a day.

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Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening training, community and patient service programs and research.

## **Is using marijuana legal in the United States?**

In most states, possession or use of marijuana is illegal. The federal government regulates marijuana. It is classified under the Controlled Substances Act as a Schedule I drug. This class of drug has no medical value and may be addictive. A few states, including California and Arizona, have laws permitting the medical use of marijuana. However, the legality of these new laws is not yet clear.

## **How might marijuana be used to treat glaucoma in the future?**

Much about the effects of marijuana is unknown. More research is needed before it becomes an accepted treatment for glaucoma. A committee commissioned by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has recommended that research into the medical use of marijuana be permitted. Also, the American Academy of Ophthalmology Committee on Drugs believes that a long-term clinical study, designed to test the safety and efficacy of marijuana appears to be appropriate. Products made from marijuana may someday be found that can lower intraocular pressure without unwanted side effects. These may be used in eye drops or tablets to treat the disease. It is not yet known which chemicals in marijuana are best for lowering eye pressure.

## **What should I do if I want to try marijuana for my glaucoma?**

Don't break the law! Be aware of the laws in your state that regulate or prohibit marijuana.

Like any drug, marijuana can be dangerous if misused. Never stop your current glaucoma therapy without first talking with your eye doctor. Your eye doctor can discuss your treatment options with you and decide if a change is needed. Never try using marijuana to treat your glaucoma unless your eye doctor prescribes it. It is possible that marijuana may interact with your current glaucoma medications or other drugs you may be taking. Never buy marijuana from sources other than those suggested by your doctor.

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