Medical Cannabis Marijuana

Cannabis is the Latin name for marijuana. It has a long history of both recreational and medical use in the United States. Washington State and many other states have enacted laws that enable patients to access, possess and use Cannabis for specific medical conditions. Each state has different laws.

April 24, 2015, the Washington State Law for Medical Cannabis was updated. Many changes have been made. It is important that you understand what your legal obligations are when using Medical Cannabis by reading the text of the law. See the links below for more information.

Cannabis may offer help to patients that have few or no other options, or who want a more natural approach to certain conditions outlined by Washington State Department of Health.

To become a patient at my clinic and pursue a medical cannabis authorization, please perform the following:

1. Read this document thoroughly about coming to our clinic to discuss Medical Cannabis (need link)
2. Read this document which is the full text of the law with green highlights on the parts that I feel pertains more specifically to patients (need link)
3. Visit the Washington State Department of Health medical cannabis page (need link)
4. Speak with me via phone so that I can get a general sense if you qualify according to state law
5. Provide medical records. Before your office visit is ideal so I can review your case (see #1 for more details on obtaining your records)
6. Office visit – generally this is one hour to thoroughly discuss your case, perform physical exam and discuss treatment options that may include medical Cannabis

Renewals – these are required by law every 6-12 months and take 30 minutes for patients established at my clinic.

**Links**

Washington State DOH – Medical Cannabis

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Marijuana/MedicalMarijuana>

You can read the full text of the law here:

<http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5052-S2.SL.pdf>

**Nuances About Medical Cannabis:**

This is officially not a “prescription” but an “authorization.” This is because Medical Cannabis is not legal on a federal level, and a prescription is defined by Federal Law. This is meant to distinguish it from prescriptions which are typically covered by insurance and accessed through federally-regulated pharmacies.

FAQ:

**Cost of a medical cannabis authorization?** You are not paying for the authorization but for a medical office visit which is typically $166 due at the time of service for first time patients or $108 for return visits. If an authorization is provided, then it is included in these prices. See information above in #1 above.

**Can I be denied employment for using Medical Cannabis?** – Yes. If a condition of your employment is to be “drug free” and they include Cannabis in their policy. If you take a urine drug screen, Cannabis will show up on the results and you may be denied employment under the State Law.

**Can’t I just use recreational cannabis?** – Maybe. The focus of recreational Cannabis is to achieve a euphoric “high” by maximizing THC content through plant hybridization. While this “high” may be useful medically for some conditions it is typically not the goal. Medical cannabis usually has lower levels of THC and higher CBD content. CBD does not achieve a “high” but can be very useful for other reasons. Medical Cannabis is also tax free (Recreational is not). The Medical Cannabis Law also provides arrest protection and allows patients to grow a limited number of plants. The Medical Cannabis Law also allows you to possess more Cannabis.

**Do I get a “Green Card”?** – No, not yet. Currently there is no “Green Card” in Washington State. The new law, however, has mandated a State database and State issued “recognition cards” be implemented by July 1, 2016. Until then, the authorization that physicians provide on State-Approved tamper-resistant paper will serve as your “green card.”

**What if I haven’t seen a doctor about my condition?** –That will be required. Sometimes there are other practitioners that you have seen (chiropractors, physical therapists, massage therapists, etc.) that may be able to provide some documentation. I can also help facilitate a “work-up” of your condition. Together we can develop a plan.

**Are you a Medical Marijuana Doctor or Clinic?** – No. I never have been and, by the new law, I cannot be. I am a primary care doctor who sees a variety of patients most of whom do not use Medical Cannabis.

**Why can’t my other doctor give me a Medical Cannabis Authorization?** – Well, they can by Washington State Law but either they personally or the clinic they work for has decided not to give the authorization. There can be various reasons why they won’t – either they disagree ethically, socially or spiritually or they fear they could be pursued under Federal Law.

Do I need an office visit to get a first or renewal Medical Cannabis Authorization? – Yes. It is a requirement of the State Law.