

USE A VAPORIZER-REDUCE YOUR RISK

Adapted from California NORML Reports, January 2001

Medical marijuana patients may be able to protect themselves from harmful toxins in marijuana smoke by inhaling their medicine using an electric vaporizer or volatizer, according to initial results of a study by California NORML (National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws) and MAPS (multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies).

This study showed that it is possible to vaporize medically active THC by heating marijuana to a temperature short of the point of combustion, thereby eliminating or substantially reducing harmful smoke toxins that are normally present in marijuana smoke. Vaporizers may therefore substantially reduce what is widely regarded as the leading health hazard of marijuana, respiratory harm due to smoking.

The vaporizer in the study produced THC at a sample temperature of 185°C (365°F), while completely eliminating three measured toxins-benzene, a known carcinogen, toluene, and naphthalene. Carbon monoxide and smoke tars were reduced, but not eliminated, since they form at higher temperatures, but more studies are needed to test these specific substances.

When vaporized, the marijuana emitted a thin gray vapor and was left with a green to greenish-brown toasted appearance. Combusted marijuana produced thick smoke and turned to ash.

An earlier study found that neither water pipes nor solid filters were effective at reducing exposure to smoke tars, due to the fact that they filtered out even more THC, thus forcing patients to inhale more to achieve the same effective dose. A recent Australian study also found that water pipes failed to reduce tars or carbon monoxide.

A wide variety of vaporizers are currently available. No comparative studies on the effectiveness of these devices have been done, so you will have to research them to find one that meets your needs and is in your price range. Some are advertised in magazines such as "High Times", others are sold over the Internet.

We would appreciate your feedback on vaporizer devices. Let us know what your experience is so we can recommend the best and most cost effective units to our clients.

The complete NORML vaporizer study, along with other references, plus an extensive list of websites for different brands of vaporizers, is available on the NORML website: www.canorml.org. Another popular vaporizer can be found at www.vaporbrothers.com