

Dear Readers,

Although there are new synthetic drugs available Cannabis and its consume remains a hot topic. We hope you enjoy the article.

Your Securetec Team



**NEWSLETTER**  
**May 2014**

## Cannabis: risky drug with medical benefits?

Legalization, medical use, but also the risks of cannabis remain hot topics with broad current media coverage.

Uruguay is the first country where the production, sale, and consumption of marijuana was legalized, making the country itself a major dealer. There are concrete efforts for state-controlled legalization, which are followed all over the world (including by investors) with great interest. In addition to legalized cultivation, registered consumers can also grow the plant for personal use.<sup>1, 2</sup>



The market for cannabis in North America grows at a fast pace. The U.S. and Canada allow the prescription of medical marijuana. The number of patients receiving such prescriptions increases.

Colorado is among the first U.S. states to completely legalize the drug. Legal changes have been made in Canada as well. The marijuana ban has been relaxed as of April 1, 2014.

Consumers believe the risks associated with tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) are minor. However, research clearly indicates that young, heavy consumers in particular are at risk. Immediate risks exist in connection with sensation, cognition, memory performance, perception, and even cardiovascular problems.<sup>3</sup>

### How dangerous is recreational use?

Despite controversial study results, it appears safe to assume that long-term users are at risk of brain damage. Furthermore, cannabis can cause social disorders all the way to acute psychotic symptoms such as confusion, hallucinations, and delusional beliefs.

One major risk is without doubt: smoking or otherwise consuming cannabis makes people unfit to drive. The drug affects mental performance and motor skills for several hours, which are needed for safe driving.

A comprehensive analysis of 50,000 major accidents confirms: **THC significantly increases the risk of accidents. Cannabis consumers are twice as likely to cause an accident with critical injuries or fatalities or be directly involved in such accidents.**<sup>4</sup>

#### References:

- 1 Süddeutsche Zeitung online, 5/3/2014: „Uruguay: Ein Gramm für weniger als 70 Cent“ (Uruguay: A gram for less than 70 cents)
- 2 Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten, 3/10/2014: „Cannabis wird zum Geheimtipp für Investoren“ (Cannabis becomes insider tip for investors)
- 3 ZEIT online, 2/25/2014: „Kiffen ist keine Todesursache“ (Smoking pot does not cause death)
- 4 „Acute cannabis consumption and motor vehicle collision risk: systematic review“, British Medical Journal, 2012

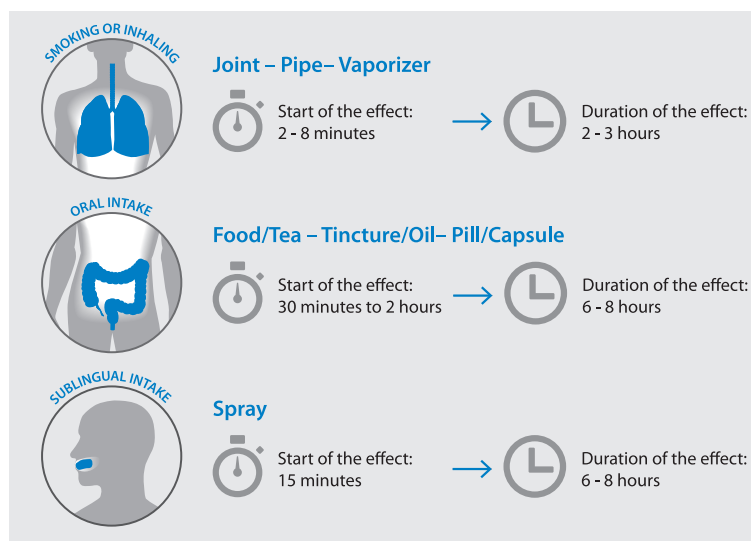
### What is the medical potential of THC?

Even in Germany, legalization is heatedly debated again and again.<sup>5</sup> Medical cannabis use fosters the positive image of the drug. Here is an overview of the topic.

Cannabis has calming, pain-inhibitory, and appetizing effects. But benefits are not only associated with THC itself. Additional substances from the cannabis extract, i.e. cannabinoids, have anti-inflammatory effects. THC and cannabinoids are not wonder drugs, but instead add-on therapies for a few special patient populations.

Their effects in treating MS are best documented. Benefits are also suggested for HIV patients. The substances provide a certain degree of relief for some conditions. In addition, the drug has proven its effectiveness in treating chronic pain and the side effects of chemotherapy.<sup>6</sup>

The health risks related to low-dose cannabis medications are considered to be minor. However, clear proof of efficacy and comprehensive studies are partially lacking. On the other hand, research faces financial, legal, and ethical obstacles.



Intake of Cannabis <sup>6,7</sup>

**DrugWipe® can detect synthetic THC as well (substances such as dronabinol or its derivative, nabilone, that are used in medications).** We are happy to provide more information on the topic.

#### References:

- 5 Spiegel online, 4/7/2014: „Cannabis-Konsum in Deutschland: Strafrechtler wollen Drogen-Gesetze reformieren“ (Cannabis consumption in Germany: Criminal lawyers want to reform drug laws“)
- 6 „Cannabis als Heilmittel“ (Cannabis as cure), F. Grotenhermen, Springer Verlag
- 7 „Cannabis: extracting the medicine“, A. Hazekamp, Leiden University, Holland

### Personal freedom cannot mean increased risk for others

According to official records, about two million Germans consume cannabis on a regular basis. About 600,000 of them fall into the category of drug abusers or addicts. In comparison, about 1.3 million people are considered alcoholics (according to Federal Government's Commissioner on Narcotic Drugs).

Securetec is confident that the risks of many drugs are underestimated, in particular those related to cannabis consumption. Therefore, we urge policymakers to act decisively:

- tight mesh of controls to uncover DUI violations
- drug testing of parties involved in every serious accident
- mandatory participation in awareness class following proof of illegal drug consumption

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