



What you need to know about **Cannabis** & your job

Attitudes about cannabis have certainly changed in the last few years. The recreational use of cannabis has been approved in several states. The medical use has been approved in most states for the proper treatment of a wide variety of clinical applications. Yet attitudes by employers vary widely.

Because cannabis is still an illegal drug at the federal level, if you have a job that involves the safety of the public, you are usually not allowed to use cannabis. If you are a “safety-sensitive” employee under the Department of Transportation and work in one of several DOT-monitored branches and positions, you are not allowed to have any THC in your system at any time. If you are an airline pilot, bus driver, train operator, pipeline worker, ship captain, or have a Commercial Driver’s License and drive large vehicles, for example, these DOT rules apply to you, and using cannabis is a DOT violation.

If your employer, whatever your job is, has policies that say you cannot have THC in your system, you may lose your job over your legal use of cannabis.

Tips for Employees:

1. **Make sure you understand your employer’s policy** about cannabis use.
2. Keep in mind that these policies override your rights to personal use of cannabis as long as you work there.
3. Understand that cannabis can stay in your system for days, weeks, or months, depending on your use and metabolism. **Even if you are not impaired** by cannabis when you show up to work on given day, if your job is subject to random testing, pre-employment testing, post-accident testing, or for-cause testing, **you may still test positive from cannabis use a week or a month previously**. Until testing is developed that measures impairment from cannabis instead of presence of THC in your system, you are at risk of testing positive even if you are not impaired.
4. Don’t rationalize your use by thinking you can rely on online or drugstore products that say they will help you pass drug tests – many don’t work at all and most increase the risk that you’ll be at greater jeopardy from an adulterated test.
5. If you have a prescription for medical cannabis, consider calling your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to confidentially talk with a professional about how this may impact your job. They know your company and can help guide you through best decisions while you weigh the pros and cons of all your options (e.g. self-disclosure, finding other medications that may be less risky to your career, weighing the risks you face and potential safety concerns, changing job/career/employer). Again, understanding your employer’s policy about cannabis use is key, as is understanding their expectation of you if you take any drug that may impact your performance.
6. A percentage of legal cannabis users (around 9-11%) will become addicted. If you believe your use has taken over territory in your life, or is creating more challenges than it is helping, call your EAP.

Remember:

- **Your state may say “OK”**
- **But your employer can still say “No Way”**
- **Know your employer’s policy!**

Employee Assistance of the Pacific

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What About CBD Products?

CBD products are now for sale everywhere you go. Numerous stores in Ala Moana mall, or any mall you go to, have signs advertising that they proudly offer CBD (Cannabidiol) oils and products. And this will only be increasing as more people hear about the potential benefits of using these products, derived from the hemp plant.

Background: Hemp and cannabis or marijuana are often used interchangeably, but are grown and cultivated for different reasons. Hemp is high in CBD content and low in THC content, and is used for textiles, food, oils, biofuels, clothing, and more. Marijuana is grown for its high THC content and is usually low in CBD.

It is possible to test positive for an employer drug test for use of most CBD products, as by law CBD products have to have less than 0.3% THC. (Although there are some CBD products that are reportedly 100% THC free.) Individuals using unusually large doses of a cannabinoid-rich hemp oil product (over 1000 mg daily) could test positive because they have consumed approximately 3 mg of THC. Even with a low dose of 0.5mg of THC from 3-4 servings of most CBD-rich hemp oil can result in a positive urine test for THC. Because most servings of high-quality, high-purity CBD-based hemp oil contains below 0.1mg of THC, it has 400-600% less THC than marijuana products, but again, use of these products could still result in a positive test.

Tips for Employees:

1. Whether you agree with it in principle or not, understand that testing for illicit drug use is a reality for many U.S. workers. It is mandatory for federal employees and for employees who are designated as “safety-sensitive” by the Department of Transportation (e.g. airline pilots and mechanics, bus drivers, pipeline operators, Coast Guard regulated employees). It is not required for most jobs in the private sector, but more employers are implementing some kind(s) of drug screening.
2. **Make sure you understand your employer’s policy** about cannabis use. Keep in mind that these policies in most states (including Hawaii) override your rights to personal use of cannabis as long as you work there.
3. **Seek advice from your doctor or health care professional** when using any CBD products if you have any concern about testing positive for THC. Understand that cannabis can stay in your system for days, weeks, or months, depending on your use and metabolism. **Even if you are not impaired** by cannabis when you show up to work on given day, if your job is subject to random testing, pre-employment testing, post-accident testing, or for-cause testing, **you may still test positive from cannabis use a week or a month previously.** Until testing is developed that measures impairment instead of presence of THC in your system, you are at risk of testing positive.
4. Be a good consumer and check out the THC content in any CBD product. Reputable CBD sellers should have a certificate of analysis (COA) for their products that show both CBD and THC levels.
5. Understand your employer’s policy about cannabis use, and their expectation of you if you take any drug that may impact your performance.
6. A percentage of legal cannabis users (around 9-11%) will become addicted, although there is no data for CBD users. If you believe your use has taken over territory in your life, or is creating more challenges than it is helping, call your EAP.

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