



# The Case for Allowing Medical Cannabis Home Cultivation

Medical cannabis laws should allow patients (or their designated caregivers) to securely grow a modest number of plants — in addition to the option of buying cannabis from dispensaries. Home cultivation is an important option for patients who cannot afford cannabis from dispensaries and for patients who need precise strains that may not be consistently available at dispensaries.

Medical cannabis is vital to the wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of patients with serious medical conditions, and it is safer than many prescriptions. Both studies and the real-world experience of patients have shown that cannabis can help numerous medical conditions, including chronic pain, seizures, spasms, and nausea.<sup>[1]</sup> While cannabis has not been shown to cause fatal overdoses,<sup>[2]</sup> prescription opiates have caused tens of thousands of deaths.<sup>[3]</sup> Numerous surveys and studies have found that cannabis can reduce or eliminate patients' need for opiates.<sup>[4]</sup>

Medical cannabis is not covered by insurance, and many people with serious illnesses cannot afford the hundreds of dollars medical cannabis costs each month. A 2018 survey by Americans for Safe Access found the average cost per month ranged from \$50 to \$1,500.<sup>[5]</sup> The survey also found that more than 88.5% of respondents reported their medicine was not affordable and 25% go without treatment because they cannot afford medical cannabis in their states.<sup>[6]</sup>

Without home cultivation, patients who cannot afford medical cannabis are forced to needlessly suffer, use more dangerous medications, such as prescription opioids, or go to the streets to obtain cannabis.

Illicit cannabis is far more dangerous than lab-tested medical cannabis. It can have pesticides and additives that are not safe for human consumption<sup>[7]</sup> — and patients have been mugged and assaulted buying cannabis on the streets. But, for many patients, purchasing cannabis on the streets is preferable to needlessly suffering or using more risky prescription medications.

Twenty-five states either allow medical cannabis home cultivation, adult-use home cultivation, or both. MPP is not aware of any significant security or diversion problems related to small-scale, secure home cultivation.

## Medical Cannabis States Allowing Home Cultivation

State	Medical Plant Limit	Adult-Use Home Cultivation and Notes
Alaska (1998)	Six plants	Since 2014, adults 21+ can cultivate up to six plants (with three being mature).
Arizona (2010)	12 plants*	*Only allowed for patients living 25+ miles from dispensaries. Since 2020, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to six plants.

State	Medical Plant Limit	Adult-Use Home Cultivation and Notes
California (1996; amounts set in 2004)	At least six mature plants or 12 immature plants	Since 2016, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to six plants.
Colorado (2000)	Six plants	Since 2012, all adults 21+ can cultivate six plants (three of which can be flowering).
Connecticut (2012; home grow added in 2021)	Three mature and three immature plants	Also, since July 1, 2023, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to three mature and three immature plants in their homes.
Hawaii (2000)	10 plants	
Illinois (2013; home grow added in 2019)	Five plants	
Maine (1999)	Six mature plants, 12 immature plants, unlimited seedlings	Since 2016, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to three flowering plants, 12 immature plants, and unlimited seedlings.
Maryland (2022)		While Maryland's medical law doesn't allow home cultivation, all adults 21+ can cultivate two plants.
Mass. (2012)	12 flowering and 12 vegetative plants	Since 2016, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to six plants.
Michigan (2008)	12 plants	Since 2018, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to 12 plants.
Minnesota (2023)		While Minnesota's medical law doesn't allow home cultivation, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to eight plants (four flowering).
Missouri (2018)	Six plants	Also, since 2022, all adults can get a card allowing cultivation of up to six mature plants.
Montana (2004)	Four mature plants, four seedlings	Since 2020, all adults 21+ can cultivate two mature plants and two seedlings.
Nevada (1998; revised in 2013)	12 plants*	*Only for those living at least 25 miles from a dispensary or those growing a strain that isn't provided at their nearby dispensary. Since 2016, adults 21+ can cultivate up to six plants if they live at least 25 miles from a retail store.
New Mexico (2007)	Four mature plants, 12 seedlings	Initially, a personal cultivation license was required. Since 2021, all adults 21+ can cultivate six mature and six immature plants.
New York (2014; home grow added in 2021)	Six plants	Also, all adults 21+ may cultivate up to three mature and three immature plants per adult.
Oregon (1998)	Six mature plants and 18 immature plants	Since 2014, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to four plants.
Ohio (2023)		While Ohio's medical law doesn't allow home cultivation, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to six plants.

State	Medical Plant Limit	Adult-Use Home Cultivation and Notes
Rhode Island (2006)	12 plants and 12 seedlings	Since 2023, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to three mature and three immature plants.
South Dakota (2020; revised in 2021)	Four plants (two mature)	
Vermont (2004)	Two mature plants and seven immature plants	Since 2018, all adults 21+ can cultivate two mature and four immature plants.
Virginia (2020)		Since 2021, all adults 21+ can cultivate up to four plants, with a tag identifying the grower.
Washington (1998)	Six plants	Adult-use cannabis has been legal since 2014 but only patients can cultivate.

[1] For citations, see:

<https://www.mpp.org/issues/medical-marijuana/medical-marijuana-research/>

[2] See Alison Mack and Janet Joy, “Marijuana As Medicine?: The Science Beyond the Controversy,” *National Academies Press*, p. 50 (“To our knowledge no marijuana user has ever died of such an overdose.”).

[3] National Institute on Drug Abuse, “Overdose Death Rates,”

<https://nida.nih.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>

[4] See:

[www.mpp.org/issues/medical-marijuana/how-access-to-medical-marijuana-helps-fight-the-opioid-epidemic/](http://www.mpp.org/issues/medical-marijuana/how-access-to-medical-marijuana-helps-fight-the-opioid-epidemic/)

[5] See Merritt Enright, Nigel Chiwaya and Robin Muccari, “‘Ridiculous’ price of medical marijuana leaves patients scrambling,” *NBCNews.com*, July 17, 2021.

[6] Americans for Safe Access, “2019 State of the States,” p. 165.

[7] Conor Ferguson, Cynthia McFadden, Shanshan Dong and Rich Schapiro, “Tests show bootleg marijuana vapes tainted with hydrogen cyanide,” *NBC News*, September 27, 2019.