



What to Know About Cannabis and Liver Transplants

In some states, people can be removed from organ waiting lists if they use it.

November 30, 2018 By [Casey Halter](#)

As medical and recreational cannabis use becomes increasingly popular across the United States, many people with liver disease are wondering how the drug might benefit them. But for those awaiting a liver transplant, using medical marijuana might not be such a good idea, MD Mag reports.

During a recent interview, Norah Terrault, MPH, MD, director of the Viral Hepatitis Center at the University of California, San Francisco, noted that while some people have hypothesized about the potential benefits of cannabis use to treat pain associated with liver disease, some states will actually remove transplant candidates from organ waiting lists if they use marijuana.

One reason is that doctors are still not sure how marijuana products interact with immunosuppressant drugs given to transplant patients post-surgery. What's more, the vast range of cannabis products on the market makes it difficult for doctors to determine which products might be safe after surgery.

Another reason doctors are wary of introducing cannabis into post-transplant care regimens is that because cannabis products are natural, they may be contaminated with molds, such as *Aspergillus*, which could lead to lethal infections among the immunocompromised.

That said, Terrault, for her part, is optimistic about the future of marijuana in the treatment of transplant patients. In fact, several studies show that cannabis can be safer than opioids in the treatment of chronic pain since it can cut the risk of addiction.

However, much more research will need to be done before doctors green-light any pre- or posttransplant cannabis use.

"I think it's an area in which we're really still learning, and as more of these [products] become available and more studies are completed, I think we will find that there is a place where the benefits certainly outweigh the risks," said Terrault. "But we are still in early days for the point of understanding that."

To learn more about liver disease and cannabis, [click here](#).

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