

**"... sheds much-needed light on this rapidly evolving field."
- Larry Dossey, MD, author of *ONE MIND***

The
**MEDICAL
MARIJUANA**
HANDBOOK

**A Patient's Guide to Holistic
Healing with Cannabis**

Norma Eckroate

Praise for *The Medical Marijuana Handbook*

The medical uses of marijuana are changing the lives of thousands of individuals and these applications will continue to expand. Norma Eckroate's *The Medical Marijuana Handbook* sheds much-needed light on this rapidly evolving field.

Larry Dossey, MD, author of *ONE MIND: How Our Individual Mind Is Part of a Greater Consciousness and Why It Matters*

The Medical Marijuana Handbook provides an in-depth and personal look into one of the leading untapped resources in modern medicine. In her wonderful book, Norma Eckroate provides insights as both a patient and a researcher on the history of cannabis, its benefits and applications, and dosing. She also explains why cannabis is one of the most beneficial medicines available today because of the unique and holistic ways that it heals. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is on a healing journey.

John Hicks, MD, author of *The Medicinal Power of Cannabis; Using a Natural Herb to Heal Arthritis, Nausea, Pain, and Other Ailments*

The Medical Marijuana Handbook is a must read for anyone who wonders if cannabis might help them. In this excellent book, Norma Eckroate provides us with a layperson's primer on the science behind cannabis. She also explains her own journey with the herb, including her initial reluctance to tell anyone she was "using" it and her great surprise at the degree to which it almost immediately quelled her symptoms. This book is chock-full of practical information – and I especially appreciate Eckroate's holistic perspectives and her body-mind-spirit approach.

Ronit Lami, PhD, psychologist, speaker, and contributing author, *Roadmap to Success*

Eckroate tackles the confusion of the newly emerging medical marijuana arena flawlessly. She is concise but thorough, scholarly yet practical. For anyone who is a medical marijuana patient, this book answers all your

questions. Eckroate writes from personal experience in a clear and friendly tone. Her heart-felt aim is to leave the reader well-informed and reassured. And she succeeds brilliantly. You will treasure this book.

Joan Bello, author of *The Benefits of Marijuana* and
The Yoga of Marijuana

In this comprehensive book, Eckroate shares practical knowledge and skillfully addresses the many questions and issues that arise for medical marijuana patients, literally “holding their hands.” An accomplished writer and researcher in the alternative health care field, Eckroate also shares her own personal quest as a patient for whom marijuana has vastly improved the quality of her life. Highly recommended for anyone considering the use of this kind herb, with its remarkable healing powers, to treat any medical condition regardless of one’s past experience with it.

David Hoye, author of *Cannabis Chemotherapy*

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Healing with Cannabis**

Norma Eckroate

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the many leading edge pioneers who have worked tirelessly for decades—and, in many cases, sacrificed greatly—to reestablish marijuana as the preeminent healing medicine that it had been for thousands of years. They are generous, intelligent, kind people who have been driven to help those who desperately need this healing herb. I appreciate all of them, including many whose names we will never know. Medical professionals who have led the way include Dr. Lester Grinspoon, Dr. Tod H. Mikuriya, Dr. Uwe Blesching, Dr. Allan Frankel, Dr. Jeffrey C. Raber, and Dr. William Courtney, to name just a few. And many ordinary citizens have played important roles too, including Jack Herer, Rick Simpson, Dennis Peron, “Brownie Mary” Rathbun, and Terence Hallinan, former District Attorney of San Francisco.

I also dedicate this book to the wonderful doctors and other health professionals who have treated me over the last decade or so, especially Dr. Joseph Sciabbarrasi, Dr. Ronald Andiman, Dr. Victoria Wexley, Dr. John Hicks, and Dean Murray. I am extremely appreciative of these kind, caring, and leading edge healers who have helped immensely on my path to greater well-being.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my fellow medical marijuana patients. May you heal, prosper, and be well!

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list them all here. However, I must single out some whose support has been over-the-top. First, I thank Cara Newell, Karen Lorre, and Carilyn Davidson, soul sisters whose love and support have been epic and life-affirming. Also, I am extremely appreciative to the leading edge friends who have played important roles in my cannabis journey. They include Kathy Eldon and Claire Humphrey, wise women who are dedicated to being beneficial presences on this planet and who connected me with others who contributed greatly to this venture; Mary Ann and David Hoye, whose love and support and friendship are boundless and who gave me valuable input on more drafts of this book than I can recall; Patrick Lang and Tina Hulett, kind and loving souls whose comments on drafts were immensely helpful and whose friendship is invaluable; Scotty Meyler, a generous and loving friend who connected me with John Hicks, MD and Betsy Hicks; and, finally the aforementioned Hickses, for their generous supportiveness and input.

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Important



Please Read This First!

Many patients extol the healing and symptom relief of medical marijuana.

However, if you elect to use marijuana as a medicine, it is wise to consider other medicines and treatment options alongside it that might prove effective or, in some cases, even critical to your recovery.

I also urge you to tap into the holistic perspective that body, mind, and spirit are all involved with the healing process.

Start with a VERY SMALL Dose

It is important to start with a very, very, very small dose of cannabis medicine and increase your dosage slowly, UNLESS:

- 1)** You are taking one of the cannabis products that do NOT cause a psychoactive “high” or “stoned” feeling;
OR
- 2)** You have developed a tolerance to cannabis through prior use.

If you take too much of a cannabis product that causes psychoactivity, you may have to take a very long nap or even sleep it off for a day or longer. It is strongly advised that you consult a medical marijuana health professional about your product choices and dosage.

A Note About Terminology

It would be helpful if all medical marijuana experts used the exact same terminology; however, that's not the case at this point in time. Here's some clarification on a few terms:

- ***Is it marijuana or cannabis?***

I use the words *marijuana* and *cannabis* interchangeably. Marijuana goes by a number of names, including cannabis and hemp, as well as many slang terms, including weed, pot, grass, hash, Mary Jane, and ganja. Actually, marijuana is a slang term too, since *cannabis* is the scientific name for this herb. Even though I use both words, I use the word *cannabis* more often since that's the real name.

- ***Is “hemp” the same as cannabis?***

The term *hemp* has different meanings to different people. In some parts of the world, the word *hemp* is often used for strains of cannabis that are medicinal. In the United States, *hemp* generally refers to varieties of the cannabis plant that are used in making nutritional supplements or industrial products, including some cannabis medicines that are made from strains of the plant that are extremely low in THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the chemical that causes psychoactivity, and high in CBD (cannabidiol), a chemical that is considered to have more healing benefits for some conditions.

- **What is “cannabis oil”?**

When I refer to *cannabis oil*, I’m referring to concentrated medicinal cannabis products that are manufactured through an extraction process. As I explain in Chapters 3 and 18, different manufacturers use different names for this type of oil.

- **What does *psychoactivity* mean?**

Psychoactivity is a term used to describe an alteration in a person’s mood or perception when a substance, such as the chemical THC in marijuana, travels through the bloodstream and into the brain. These alterations can include positive experiences, such as euphoric feelings, relaxation, increased alertness, and an altered sense of time and space—or, for those who take extremely high doses or have a very low tolerance level, negative experiences, such as hallucinations, paranoia, anxiety, or impaired memory. **As explained in this book, some forms of cannabis are now available that produce *little* or *NO* psychoactivity.**

About Chronic Pain

Medical cannabis can help to quell pain, one of the most common symptoms patients deal with. However, did you know that leading edge neuroscientists have found that chronic pain can develop into a disease condition on its own? If you are experiencing long-term pain that is often excruciatingly severe from a condition that should have healed, this new understanding of the reasons for chronic pain—and the solutions for it—might be life-changing for you. Medical marijuana may help in the short-term; however, I urge you to look into this breakthrough understanding in pain as well.

Leading edge doctors and scientists at the forefront of neuroplasticity explain that the extreme level of pain that many patients experience is caused by the “plasticity” of the brain going haywire. As these scientists learn more about the brain’s plastic nature—the ability it has to “rewire” itself—they find that many people are suffering from an elevated experience of pain because their brains are literally creating *more* pain. This type of persistent and severe pain, experienced repeatedly over months or years, is called “wind-up pain,” “learned pain,” or chronic pain syndrome. When this happens, the “pain centers” in the brain can expand and actually hijack surrounding areas—taking over other “cortical real estate”—and causing the elevation in pain.

In a brain that’s been hijacked by pain in this way, each of the nine main areas that are designed for processing pain can expand and encompass an area up to five times larger than normal, a fact that is easy to validate with brain scans. When this happens, the areas of the brain that have been hijacked are unable to perform their normal functions as well as they previously did, potentially impacting the ability to deal with tasks such as problem solving, planning, conflict resolution, autobiographical memory, regulating emotions, and relieving pain. Chronic pain often results in a noisy brain, a confused brain, a foggy brain, difficulty with focus and attention, and a constant feeling of being overwhelmed. A “dull” feeling overrides life, and the act of processing a thought or answering a question takes a huge amount of energy. While a patient with this condition may still function fairly well in some of life’s arenas, other tasks may feel overwhelming and cause suffering.

The work of experts on this topic has upleveled my life tremendously. I believe anyone who might be dealing with this type of chronic persistent pain will benefit from the leading edge techniques developed by a number of doctors and scientists who are at the forefront of neuroplasticity. I highly suggest you learn more

about persistent chronic pain and ways to “take back” any cortical real estate that has been diverted in this way in your own brain by referring to the websites and books of Norman Doidge, MD; Michael H. Moskowitz, MD and his coauthor, Marla D. Golden, DO; Howard Schubiner, MD; John E. Sarno, MD; and Joe Dispenza, DC.

About Product Recommendations

While there are a few exceptions, for the most part, I don't recommend specific products in this book. There are several reasons for this. Each state and jurisdiction around the world that permit the use of medical cannabis has its own regulations. Products that are widely used in one jurisdiction may not be legal in other jurisdictions. Also, I'm hesitant to give product recommendations because a product could provide benefits, such as symptom relief, yet still contain toxins due to being grown on depleted, toxic, or pesticide-laden soil or contain mold, spores, bacteria, viruses, insects, or parasites. Quality control is up to growers and manufacturers who must continually test for both safety and potency. In addition, sometimes a company that produces high-quality products changes management or ownership, which can drastically impact their quality standards.

Introduction

I entered the world of medical marijuana out of desperation. Decades of challenging symptoms from the presumed diagnosis of mild cerebral palsy had beaten me down physically and mentally. Many times, over many years, I thought about how medical marijuana might help. But the craziness around this herb scared me off—until, one day, I finally looked into it. And I'm so glad I did.

In this book I have distilled information that I found helpful in my personal quest to understand the herb, its various forms, and the newly available options in strains and product types. This information is culled and sifted from numerous sources and presented from a layperson's perspective; it is as up-to-date and accurate as possible. My desire is answer your questions, soothe your concerns, and give you the information that you—or a family member or friend—need to better understand it from a holistic perspective so you can effectively use it if that is your choice.

I also share some specifics about the choices I've made, as well as experiences that other patients have shared with me. My focus isn't to give you information on how to roll and smoke a joint, how to use a bong or pipe, recipes for edibles, or how to grow your own marijuana, which is beyond the scope of this book. All of that information is available in books, magazines, and on the Internet. Also, the legalities of medical marijuana are changing so rapidly that getting into those specifics as they relate to countries and states around the world would be fruitless because it would be out of date before this book is published.

Finally, the list of conditions that are now being effectively treated with marijuana is long and exhaustive—and it is constantly being

added to; therefore, a list would be out-of-date before it was published. And, anyway, it's best if you do your own research to obtain the most current information possible from experts and from other patients for the condition you're dealing with.