Marijuana:
What You Need to Know

Approved Marijuana Use:

Currently, Health Canada has approved marijuana for use in the following conditions:
- Nausea and vomiting from cancer treatment
- Relief of nerve type pain/pain and muscle spasms from multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Severe pain from advanced cancer

Use for other conditions are off-label, and are not supported by evidence.

Available Commercial Drug Products:

- Nabilone (Cesamet®)- oral capsule
- Tetranabinex/ nabidiolex (Sativex®) – Buccal Spray (for use in the cheek inside the mouth)

In unlicensed products, the lack of quality control may increase risk of contamination with pesticides or bacteria/fungus.

Drug Interaction:

Marijuana can interact with your anti-rejection medications, tacrolimus or cyclosporine, so more frequent bloodwork may be required to ensure your drug levels (amount of medication in your body) are within the desired range. Too high levels may cause more side effects and too low levels increase your chance for rejection.

Risk of Smoking/ Inhalation Marijuana:

Transplant recipients who smoke marijuana could develop aspergillus infection, a type of serious lung infection caused by a fungus. This can lead to poor health status and death. Inhaling weed oil could cause lipid pneumonia (a serious lung infection that can be deadly). It is NOT recommended to smoke or inhale marijuana.

Risk of Edible Marijuana (e.g. cookies):

The amount of THC/ cannabinol (active ingredients in marijuana) in each product may vary. Regular bloodwork is important to ensure your drug levels are within the desired range. However, in general, edible marijuana is considered less harmful than smoking marijuana since there is less chance for aspergillus lung infection.

Side Effects:

- Short term effects: nausea, confusion, dizziness, vertigo (spinning sensation)
- Possible long term effects: anxiety, depression, difficulty with memory, thinking and reasoning

Please speak to your pharmacist, if you have any concerns regarding this handout