High On Adherence

Mary Jane May Not Muddle All Med Takers

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Studies have reported that hard-partying HIVers may forget (or ignore) their meds when high. But recent data suggest that puffing to lessen certain side effects doesn't lessen adherence.

An NIH-funded investigation at California's San Mateo Medical Center of 168 HIVers on HAART found that alcohol and party-drug use did indeed correlate with missed meds. But some marijuana users—those suffering "moderate to severe" nausea—actually had better med adherence. Only the non-nauseated HIVers exhibited poorer adherence when they lit up. (Results were published in January's *Journal* of AIDS.)

So, everybody must get stoned? Hold your fire: The researchers "do not advocate [marijuana's] widespread use." They stress that the study results merely "suggest that using marijuana to relieve nausea is not associated with lower rates of adherence."

David Bangsberg MD,of San Francisco General Hospital's AIDS Program, says, "All drugs aren't the same—marijuana's not usually as harmful to adherence as [other] stimulants, or even alcohol." And, Bangsberg explains, since pot effectively alleviates nausea, which often causes HIVers to miss doses, "for this group of people, it's reasonable that marijuana's benefits could have outweighed the risks."

Todd Glanville, a Toronto long-term HIVer, smokes to stoke his daily battle with weight loss. "I don't even want to get high," Todd says. "It interferes with my life too much. I just smoke enough to make my HIVmeds tolerable and to maintain my weight—because it works." Choosing for yourself what's best? A smokin' idea.

Space Cakes

Whether you bake from scratch or use a mix, the magic's in the oil. To prepare the shortening for Mary Jane sweets

1. In a frying pan over low heat, melt the shortening— butter or oil—specified by the brownie recipe.

2. Remove seeds and stems from about a half ounce of marijuana (obtained with a doc’s script, of course!). Grind the weed fine in a coffee grinder, then cook in the oil over low heat for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring. (This breaks down the cell walls of the leaves, releasing the active ingredient THC into the fat.) Let it sit about 5 minutes.

3. Strain the shortening through a sifter or cheesecloth to remove all the pot. Now use the shortening to bake the brownies, following the instructions on the box—or, if you’re channeling Martha Stewart, in the cookbook recipe.

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