Even though states are legalizing cannabis, under federal law cannabis remains a “dangerous” Schedule I controlled substance – treated just like heroin or PCP. This is why using recreational or medical marijuana, or even working in the industry, can be so dangerous for noncitizens.

If possible, avoid cannabis in any form until you are a U.S. citizen. This might seem unfairly restrictive, but it is the best guarantee against immigration consequences. Remember, it doesn’t matter that marijuana is permitted under state law – it’s still dangerous for immigrants.

Do not work in the marijuana industry. Although business is booming in this area, it may not be worth it if you are looking to qualify for some benefit in the future, which includes gaining your citizenship.

If you have a medical need and there is no good substitute for medical cannabis, seek a legal consult first. This will help to at least weigh your options against your risks.

Never leave your house carrying: marijuana, a medical marijuana card, paraphernalia (like pipe or marijuana vape pen), or accessories like marijuana apparel.

Do not have marijuana-related photos on your phone or share any on social media. With the growing Homeland Security surveillance apparatus, this content is best kept off the internet.

Never discuss marijuana use or possession with any immigration or border official, unless you receive expert legal advice that this is ok. If an officer presses you on it, say that you do not want to talk to them, and you want to speak to a lawyer. Remember, you always have the right to remain silent. Once you admit to anything, you cannot take it back.