

SOUTH KOREA

ASIA



Travel & Possession Permitted with Limited or No Restrictions



Summary

- Limited medical marijuana program exists under the Narcotics Control Act (Act No. 17091, amended 2020).
- Recreational cannabis: Fully prohibited under the Narcotics Control Act, with strict penalties for possession, use, cultivation, or distribution.

Background

South Korea permits only highly restricted medical use of cannabis-derived products through government authorization.

- Cannabis (marijuana) and its resin are classified as Cannabis under Narcotics in Article 2 and are generally prohibited.
- Exceptions exist under Article 3(2) and Article 4, which allow import, manufacture, or use for medical, educational, research, or government-approved purposes.
- The Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) and the Korea Orphan Drug Center (KODC) manage patient access to approved cannabis-based pharmaceuticals, including Epidiolex, Sativex, Marinol, and Cesamet.
- Patients must secure prior import approval, with a prescription and supporting medical documentation.

Non-Medical Cannabis

- Possession, cultivation, import, or use of cannabis for recreational purposes is strictly prohibited, regardless of THC content.
- Penalties: up to 5 years' imprisonment or fines up to 50 million KRW for simple possession/use; harsher penalties for trafficking or cultivation.
- Korean nationals may be prosecuted for cannabis use committed abroad (extraterritorial enforcement).



Traveling to South Korea with Medical Cannabis

Travelers may only take cannabis-based medicines if they are on the MFDS-approved list and have obtained prior authorization through the KODC before arrival.

Steps to Take Before Departure:

1. Check if the product is approved by the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety of the Republic of Korea (MFDS);
2. Obtain KODC import permission prior to travel, through the following link:
https://www.mfds.go.kr/brd/m_74/view.do?seq=43906&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=%EB%A7%88%EC%95%BD&srchTp=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&multi_itm_seq=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&Data_stts_gubun=C9999&page=1
3. Carry the original prescription, MFDS approval letter, and medication in original packaging.

All other cannabis-derived products (including CBD oils, edibles, hemp supplements) are prohibited.

Korean Narcotics Policy Division Contact Information

- Phone: +82-43-719-1564
- Email: narcotics@korea.kr
- Website: <https://www.mfds.go.kr/eng/index.do>

Practical Tips

- Recreational cannabis is illegal in all circumstances; possession of any cannabis product without MFDS approval is a criminal offense.
- Make sure to get approval from the MFDS before taking medical marijuana into South Korea.

The information provided reflects the most current data available; however, as cannabis laws are continually evolving, this content should not be interpreted as legal advice.

//END OF REPORT//