



Medical Cannabis Program

CANNABIS 101

WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis, also commonly known as marijuana or weed, comes from the cannabis plant and has been used throughout history recreationally, for wellness purposes, and to treat a variety of medical conditions. The cannabis plant has hundreds of chemical compounds, including cannabinoids and terpenes.

WHAT ARE CANNABINOIDS?

Cannabinoids are natural compounds found in the cannabis plant; each of which can have different effects on the body. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) are the most common, but there are more than 100 cannabinoids. THC is known for its psychoactive effects (a feeling of being high). CBD does not directly produce a feeling of being high and may counteract some of the psychoactive effects of THC.

WHAT ARE TERPENES?

Terpenes are natural compounds found within the cannabis plant that can create different aromas and flavors. For example, common terpenes give cannabis aromas of:

- **Citrus** (limonene)
- **Pine** (pinene)
- **Lavender** (linalool)
- **Black pepper** (caryophyllene)

Terpenes have been shown to have various therapeutic effects. Researchers are studying how cannabinoids and terpenes work together to create the unique medicinal effects of the cannabis plant. This is referred to as the “**entourage effect.**”





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HOW TO ACCESS MEDICAL CANNABIS

The first step is speaking with your health care provider about whether medical cannabis may be appropriate for your condition. If your provider determines it may be appropriate for you to try medical cannabis, you will need to be certified and register with the program.

For more information about the Medical Cannabis Program, how to find a health care provider and get certified, and patient FAQs, visit www.cannabis.ny.gov/patients.

WHAT TO TAKE AND HOW MUCH TO TAKE

As part of the certification process, your health care provider may recommend what type of product to take and how much to take. They may recommend how to take it, such as taking the medication by mouth or inhaling by vaporization, and the ratio of THC to CBD in a dose. Staff members at medical cannabis dispensaries in New York State may also make recommendations. These details are determined by your condition and your needs. Different combinations of THC and CBD are included in medical cannabis products, and the amount of THC and CBD in each dose is shown on the label. Pharmacists are available at New York State medical dispensaries. You can always ask to speak to a pharmacist.

TYPES OF MEDICAL CANNABIS PRODUCTS

There are many ways to take medical cannabis:

Capsules/tablets – swallowed and absorbed into the digestive system

Lozenges – dissolve in the mouth, rather than being swallowed whole like capsules or tablets

Chewables – chewed, rather than swallowed whole

Tinctures – liquids that are placed under the tongue with a dropper

Topicals (such as lotions) – applied onto the skin, directly on the area to be treated

Whole flower – intended for vaporization

Vaporization – cannabis (oil or flower) heated to a high temperature, creating a water vapor that is inhaled



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ONSET AND DURATION OF EFFECTS *

Form of Medical Cannabis	Onset of Effects	Duration of Effects
Vaporization/ Topicals	Faster	Shorter
Tinctures / Lozenges/ Chewables	Intermediate	Intermediate
Capsules/Tablets	Slower	Longer

**The expected onset and duration of medical cannabis effects may vary from person to person. Patients should follow instructions on the product label and should not take more than recommended.*

START LOW AND GO SLOW

If you haven't used cannabis before, or it has been a while since you've used cannabis, it's good to "start low and go slow." It's better to start with a lower dose and work your way up to a stronger dose if needed for your condition. It can take time to determine the dose and form that works best for you.

PURCHASING MEDICAL CANNABIS

Medical cannabis can only be purchased at dispensaries which are owned by registered organizations. Go to www.cannabis.ny.gov for a list of registered organizations and dispensary locations. For more information about the types of products available for purchase, contact the registered organization directly. Some registered organizations offer home delivery.



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POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS AND WARNINGS

When you buy medical cannabis from a dispensary in New York State, you will receive a package safety insert with details about how to use it, possible side effects, and safety warnings. If you have any questions about the products, including how to prevent or reduce side effects, you can talk with the pharmacist at the dispensary, or with your health care provider.

Some side effects of medical cannabis may include:

- Fatigue
- Increased appetite
- Feeling high
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Red eyes

Some warnings that patients should be aware of:

Avoid driving, operating heavy machinery and other potentially dangerous activities while taking medical cannabis. Use caution if you drink alcohol or take other drugs. Mixing medical cannabis with alcohol or other drugs could lead to a bad reaction, especially if the other drugs cause dizziness, drowsiness or sedation. Be sure your provider or pharmacist is aware of all other drugs you are taking.

If you have concerns related to serious side effects you feel after using medical cannabis, call Poison Control at (800) 222-1222 or call your medical practitioner.



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MEDICAL CANNABIS MIGHT NOT BE RIGHT FOR YOU IF YOU:

- are pregnant or breastfeeding;
- have been diagnosed with or have family history of serious mental illness;
- have a history of cardiovascular disease, such as heart attack, high blood pressure or stroke;
- are immunocompromised (unable to fight off infections due to a weakened immune system);
- have a history of respiratory (lung) disease, especially with inhaled products;

Talk with your certifying provider if any of these scenarios apply to you. Providers are required to explain the potential risks and benefits of medical cannabis to you before certifying you for medical cannabis use. Have a list of all your medical conditions and medications you are taking with you for your appointment.

WHAT TO REMEMBER IF YOU DECIDE TO PURCHASE MEDICAL CANNABIS AND BRING IT HOME:

Locations where Medical Cannabis Can be Used

Vaporization of medical cannabis products is prohibited anywhere that smoking tobacco is illegal. Consumption of any medical cannabis products is not permitted in a motor vehicle. Medical cannabis cannot be transported from New York State into other states or countries, or from other states or countries into New York State.

Safe Storage

Keep all medical cannabis products in the original child-resistant packaging it came in from the dispensary. Products must be stored under the proper conditions as labeled by the registered organization and must always be kept secure. Medical cannabis products **MUST BE KEPT AWAY FROM CHILDREN** (unless the product is being given to the child under a provider's certification and care). Do not expose medical cannabis products to extreme temperatures or store them in a vehicle.

If someone has taken medical cannabis products accidentally and is having an adverse reaction, call Poison Control at (800) 222-1222.



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IF CANNABIS USE BEGINS TO INTERRUPT YOUR LIFE

Talk to your health care provider, dispensary pharmacist, or a substance use counselor if you think your medical cannabis use is disrupting your daily life, causing problems at work or home, or if you crave cannabis.

You may experience symptoms if you abruptly stop using medical cannabis. This is normal and may occur with many properly used medications. Common symptoms related to stopping cannabis use may include:

- anxiety
- difficulty sleeping
- irritability
- mild depression
- moodiness

Symptoms can vary from patient to patient. If you become concerned with the symptoms you are experiencing, please contact your health care provider.

Call the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (1-877-846-7369) or visit www.oasas.ny.gov to learn more about cannabis use disorder and treatment.

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- In the medical program, you will be using cannabis under your provider's care. This is important if you have a serious health condition, take other medications, or have questions about cannabis use and your condition.
- New York State recently expanded the medical program to allow your provider to certify you for any condition that you may have – so eligibility for the program has greatly increased.
- Registered organizations are required to have pharmacists available to review medications you are taking, recommend product forms, discuss your cannabis use, and help you find and maintain the best dosage for you.
- Registered organizations are required to offer products that are tested for consistent concentrations (mg) of THC and CBD.
- Lower tax rate for medical cannabis products versus adult-use products may provide for more cost-effective product choices for patients.
- Under a provider's certification and care, medical cannabis may be available to patients under 21 years of age.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Visit www.cannabis.ny.gov/patients for more information about the New York State Medical Cannabis Program. Your health care provider can help you determine if medical cannabis might help your condition. If your regular provider does not participate with the program; you can find a list of participating providers at the above web page by clicking on the "Find a Practitioner" button.

CONTACT THE OFFICE OF CANNABIS MANAGEMENT

Website: cannabis.ny.gov

Email: info@ocm.ny.gov

Call: 1-888-OCM-5151 (1-888-626-5151)



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