



WHO CAN CONSUME?

- **Adult-Use Cannabis:** Anyone 21 years or older is allowed to possess up to 3 ounces of cannabis flower and 24 grams of cannabis concentrate (like edibles or oil).
- **Medical Cannabis Program:** Anyone who has a recommendation from a New York State certified health care provider can apply for a medical cannabis card. Patients of any age can be certified as a patient for any condition deemed suitable by the provider including but not limited to: Alzheimer's, Cancer, Chronic Pain, Epilepsy, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, Anxiety, and Substance Use Disorder.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO CONSUME RESPONSIBLY?

There are many important factors to consider when consuming cannabis responsibly and safely. The effects of cannabis can vary from one individual to another and from one product formulation to another. The key to understanding how cannabis works best for you is to learn about different potencies and product forms.

Patience is key, as it can take time to determine which cannabis consumption method and serving size works best for you. **The number one tip if it is your first-time consuming cannabis, or you haven't in while is to "start low and go slow"**. Start with products that have a low amount of THC. This may look like consuming a quarter of an edible or one sip of a beverage. Wait to feel the effects before consuming more. While inhalation methods have a rapid onset of effects, edibles can take several hours to feel the effects. Other things to consider include:

- **Do you have a pre-existing mental health condition?** Adverse effects such as psychosis may occur in individuals with preexisting mental health conditions that consume larger serving sizes of THC.
- **Are you consuming any other substances?** Use caution if you drink alcohol or take other substances while you consume cannabis. Mixing cannabis with alcohol or other drugs (prescription or otherwise) could lead to a negative reaction such as dizziness, drowsiness, or sedation. If you're taking prescription drugs, be sure to ask your healthcare provider about potential interactions with cannabis.

Avoid driving, operating heavy machinery and other potentially dangerous activities while taking cannabis.

WHAT ABOUT MY VA BENEFITS?

Veterans will not be denied VA benefits due to cannabis use.¹ Additionally, Veteran participation in state cannabis programs does not affect eligibility for VA Care and Services. Veterans should be aware of the following:

- VA health care providers will record cannabis use in the Veteran's VA medical record in order to have the information available in treatment planning. As with all clinical information, this is part of the confidential medical record and protected under patient privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.²
- VA clinicians **may not** recommend medical cannabis.
- VA clinicians may only prescribe medications that have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for medical use. At present, most products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), cannabidiol (CBD), or other cannabinoids are not approved for this purpose by the FDA.
- VA pharmacies **may not** fill prescriptions for medical cannabis.
- VA **will not** pay for medical cannabis prescriptions from any source.
- Veterans who are VA employees are subject to drug testing under the terms of employment.
- The use or possession of cannabis is prohibited at all VA medical centers, locations and grounds. When you are on VA grounds it is federal law that is in force, not the laws of the state.
- Veterans are encouraged to discuss cannabis use with their VA providers.³
- VA clinicians **may not** recommend, make referrals to, complete forms or register patients for medical cannabis.

WILL MY EMPLOYER ALLOW ME TO CONSUME CANNABIS AT WORK?

- In New York, employers may:
 - Take disciplinary action against someone for using cannabis or being impaired during work hours, even when on break, if it lessens the performance of their duties or interferes with an employer's obligation to provide a safe and healthy workplace.⁴
 - Prohibit employees from bringing cannabis onto the employer's property, including office space, company vehicles, and areas such as lockers, breakrooms, and desks.⁴
- Unless federal or state law mandates cannabis drug testing as a requirement for a position, employers in New York **cannot**:
 - Use cannabis test results to make decisions relating to hiring or firing, or
 - Ask about your cannabis use outside of work.⁵
- In New York, Medical Cannabis Patients are treated as having a disability and are protected from discriminatory action based solely on their status in the Medical Cannabis Program. **However, use or impairment on the job is not a protected activity.**
- Examples of employers and/or positions that may legally include cannabis drug testing as a requirement for a position:
 - Positions with the federal government
 - Positions with an employer with a federal contract or federal funding
 - Drivers of commercial motor vehicles in accordance with 49 CFR Part 382
 - For-hire vehicle motor carriers in accordance with 49 CFR Part 382

Consult with an appropriate legal professional if you have questions.

WHAT IF I HAVE A JOB REQUIRING SECURITY CLEARANCE?

- Cannabis is **illegal** under federal law.
- You should consider the potential impact that consuming cannabis may have on your current or future employment.
- Consult with an appropriate legal professional if you have questions.

CAN I DRIVE AFTER I CONSUME MEDICAL CANNABIS?

- **Driving while high or impaired by cannabis is illegal for everyone.** There are **no exceptions** for Medical Cannabis Program participants. It is illegal for **anyone** (both drivers **and** passengers) to consume or have open cannabis products in a vehicle. If you drive under the influence of cannabis, you can be charged with a DUI.
- Keep cannabis locked, out of sight, out of reach, and away from individuals under 21 years old and pets. Any cannabis being transported should be stored securely in a trunk or glovebox.



Scan the QR code or visit cannabis.ny.gov/equity to learn more about the **Social & Economic Equity**



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Thank you to our colleagues in state service at the Department of Labor, Department of Health and Office of General Services for your contributions to this guide.

^{1,2} US Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration. "VA and Marijuana - What Veterans Need to Know." publichealth.va.gov/Marijuana.asp, 9 Feb. 2017.

³ Veterans Health Administration. "Department of Veterans Affairs VHA Directive 1315." ACCESS TO VHA CLINICAL PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS PARTICIPATING IN STATE-APPROVED MARIJUANA PROGRAMS, 28 July 2023, va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=11394.

^{4,5} New York State Department of Labor. "Adult Use Cannabis and the Workplace." [Dol.ny.gov](https://dol.ny.gov), 18 Oct. 2021, dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/10/p420-cannabisfaq-10-08-21.pdf. Accessed 22 Nov. 2024.