

Cannabis and Cancer

In this booklet, you will learn about:

- Cannabis and its components
- Medicinal cannabis and recreational cannabis
- The effects of cannabis
- Ways cannabis is used
- The laws around cannabis

Table of Contents

Cannabis and Cancer	4
What is cannabis made of?	5
Recreational and medicinal cannabis	6
Ways cannabis is used	8
Effects of cannabis.....	9
Who can use cannabis and what are the laws.....	11
The research behind cannabis.....	13

Cannabis and Cancer

Cannabis (kan-uh-bis) is also known as marijuana (mar-uh-wah-nuh) and legal in Canada. It can be recreational and medicinal. If you are interested in using cannabis, there are better ways than recreational cannabis. Medicinal cannabis may be a choice to manage your symptoms when other treatments do not work.

In this booklet, you will learn about:

- Cannabis and its components
- Medicinal cannabis and recreational cannabis
- The effects of cannabis
- Ways cannabis is used
- The laws around cannabis

What is cannabis made of?

Cannabis is made up of many chemical parts called cannabinoids (kuh-nab-uh-noid). Cannabinoids have an effect on cells in the brain and body that change how they behave and communicate with other cells.

The two main cannabinoids are:

THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol)	CBD (Cannabidiol)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Causes mood changes (“high”)• Lowers pain• Helps nausea• Helps muscle spasms• Improves appetite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not give you a high• Lessens inflammation, seizures, and anxiety• Improves sleep• Lowers pain

The medical effects of cannabis that are listed in this table are not proven by research. Please speak to your health care provider for more information.

Recreational and medicinal cannabis

Medicinal cannabis

- Medicinal cannabis is made by using parts of the cannabis plant to get THC or CBD for treatment of symptoms.
- Is sold through Health Canada licensed producers and providers.
- Medicinal cannabis use can be authorized by a nurse practitioner or doctor.

Recreational cannabis

- It is illegal to buy recreational cannabis from an unlicensed provider.
- You do not need medical authorization to buy recreational cannabis.
- Recreational cannabis is used to get a “high.”
- **Buying recreational cannabis from a licensed provider lowers the chance that it will have:**
 - fungal contamination
 - unknown impurities
 - pesticides
 - a dosage that may change each time you buy it

Authorization

- Health care providers do not prescribe medicinal cannabis, they authorize use.
- Sunnybrook has experts who can help you with this. Ask your healthcare team (nurse, doctor, pharmacist, social worker, dietician) who you can speak to about medicinal cannabis. The pharmacy team can help you with the rest of the process.

How to get medicinal cannabis

- It is not legal to buy medicinal cannabis from an unlicensed provider.
- You can register with Health Canada to grow a small amount for your own medical use.
- We do not advise that you switch from medicinal to recreational cannabis because there may be more THC in recreational cannabis. THC causes a “high.”

Laws

- You can only carry the lesser of 150 grams, or a 30-day supply of dried medicinal cannabis.
- There are strict rules for growing cannabis for medicinal use.
- It is not legal to transport cannabis across the Canadian border.

Ways cannabis is used

Cannabis can be used in many different ways. To keep you safe we recommend you take medicinal cannabis in an oil form or in capsules filled with cannabis oil.

We do not recommend using cannabis in these ways:

- **Smoking**
 - Joints or spliffs (cannabis rolled in cigarette paper)
- **Pipes and bongs**
- **Blunts** (partially or entirely hollowed out cigar wrappers filled with cannabis)
- **Drinking or eating** (edibles for sale are not legal at this time):
 - Teas
 - Sodas
 - Baked goods
- **Vaporizing/vaping** (breathing in dried cannabis or liquid cannabis vapours through a vaporizer or vaping device)
- **Dabbing** (breathing in very hot vapours from heating cannabis)

Effects of cannabis

How long do the effects of cannabis last?

- Effects can last more than 24 hours after you use cannabis. This will depend on:
 - How much and how often it was taken
 - How you take cannabis

Side Effects

This list does not include all side effects.

Short-term side effects:

- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Drowsiness
- Bigger appetite
- Blurred vision
- Diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting
- No energy

Long-term side effects:

- Depression
- Lack of motivation
- Issues with learning, memory and attention
- An effect on your mental health (delusions, hallucination, psychosis, schizophrenia)
- Higher risk of chest infections if you smoke or vape
- Tolerance - needing larger doses of cannabis to maintain the same effects
- Nausea and vomiting

We do not recommend inhaling or smoking cannabis because:

- **We do not fully understand the health effects of smoking it.**
- **It will affect your lungs.**
- **You do not know how much THC and CBD you inhale.**

Problem-use

People **can** start to rely on cannabis. If you use it a lot, you may start to depend on it.

If cannabis affects your motivation or mental health, please speak to a member of your healthcare team as soon as possible.

Who can use cannabis and what are the laws?

Ontario is enforcing laws around the use of recreational cannabis.

The Cannabis Act

What is a licensed cannabis provider?

- Providers must have a licence given to them by the government to sell and grow cannabis.
- If you have been authorized by your healthcare team to use cannabis, you can buy it from providers who have a license to sell it.

What is an unlicensed provider?

- If the provider that you buy cannabis from does not have a government license, it is illegal to buy cannabis from them.

Age Restrictions, Purchase and Public Use

- You must be 19 years of age or older
- Cannabis must only be bought from the government-regulated sellers
 - Legal cannabis should have a stamp on the package



- You can only have 30 grams of legal cannabis in your possession in public (unless authorized for medical purposes).

Driving

- Driving vehicles or operating heavy machinery under the influence of cannabis is illegal. Do not drive high.

Cannabis and Youth

- Cannabis can cause the most harm to youth because their brains are still developing until the age of 26.

It is illegal to share cannabis with youth under the age of 19.

The research behind cannabis

The research does not show that cannabis is an effective treatment for all symptoms. There is more research that needs to be done.

Research is being done to understand:

- Trends
- Patterns in cannabis use
- Medicinal cannabis
- Side effects
- Medicinal cannabis benefits

There are people and services here that can help you understand more about cannabis and cancer at the Odette Cancer Centre.

Odette Cancer Centre Cannabis Consultation Program

Tel: 416.480.6100
extension 1085

E-mail: med.cannabis@sunnybrook.ca

The Cannabis Consultation Program is available as a resource for patients who want to learn more about cannabis or want to be assessed for authorization of medicinal cannabis.

Odette Cancer Centre Pharmacy

Tel: 416.480.4671

Location: T-wing,
first floor

Visit with one of our pharmacists who will go over all of your medications with you and help figure out if cannabis is safe to take with your chemotherapy and other medicines.

Site Nursing Team

Call extension 5000 to speak to a nurse.

Odette Nutrition Resource Centre

Tel: 416.480.3438

Location: Odette Cancer Centre, T-wing, ground floor, TG-261 (across from Druxy's)

A free drop-in service for you to meet with Clinical Nutrition staff that can review your diet and answer any questions or concerns about nutrition.

Health Canada

Web: canada.ca/en/health-canada.html

E-mail: ccs@cancer.ca

Educational website that includes information about cannabis laws, accessing for recreational or medical purposes, health risks and effects.

Odette Patient & Family Support

Tel: 416.480.4623

Location: TG-230 (T-wing, ground floor)

Free services to help you manage stress, worry, financial concerns, changes in health, and daily activities.

While this information may be useful, it is intended for educational purposes only. **Please continue to ask your health care team if you have questions or concerns.** For any other inquiries, please contact us at patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca.

Created May, 2019

Odette Cancer Centre
2075 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4N 3M5
sunnybrook.ca/programs/occ



Sunnybrook
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE