

Safe Use of Medical Cannabis

Medical Cannabis Facts

- Our bodies naturally produce certain types of cannabinoids (endocannabinoids) that interact with receptors in the brain and body.
- The cannabis plant has two well-known cannabinoids that can interact with our bodies' cannabinoid receptors:
 1. THC – makes you feel “high”, relaxes muscles, eases pain, can cause short term memory effects and appetite stimulation (e.g. give you “the munchies”).
 2. CBD – does not make you “high”, can decrease THC effects and eases anxiety, inflammation and pain.
- Adult Use cannabis for medical purposes should have both CBD and some amount of THC for best desired effect.

Access to Cannabis

- Cannabis is best obtained through authorization from a health practitioner (MD or NP) who can provide advice about dosing and monitoring of effects and symptoms. This allows access to cannabis from a Health Canada Licensed Producer. This authorization can also be submitted as a tax return as a medical expense.
- Adult Use cannabis can be obtained through dispensaries without a prescription. All legal dispensaries in Canada sell products from licensed and regulated producers.

Best ways to use Cannabis for Arthritic Pain

Cannabis products for arthritis should be high in CBD and low in THC.

1. Topicals – creams, ointments, salves
 - Rub in to the painful area, reapply as needed. Will not get you “high”.
 - Can be safely used with other medications and herbs.
2. Sublingual/Edibles – tinctures, oils, food or beverages
 - Use tinctures or oil drops under the tongue (sublingual). Ideally take on a full stomach 20 minutes after taking regular prescribed drugs.
 - Edibles take a longer time to take effect (up to 2 hours) and the effect can last up to 8 hours
3. Suppositories - work faster than an edible
4. Flower – dried herb
 - Use with a vaporizer. Can take a few minutes before effects are noticeable.

- Do not smoke cannabis as it can be toxic to the lungs. Extracts are NOT recommended due to health concerns issued by Health Canada.

Safe Use

- Using cannabis is NOT recommended if:
 - If you use Warfarin, Coumadin, Zopiclone, Codeine; you have ever had a heart attack or stroke; you have a history of psychosis or schizophrenia (cannabis does not cause these mental disorders but can make them worse).
- Start with a small amount, i.e. one drop under the tongue, one puff from a vaporizer. Wait, see how you feel and repeat should you need to.
- If you have had too much THC...relax, this will pass. You cannot fatally overdose on cannabis but you can still overdo it. Choose a safe and private place to use.
- Once consumed, cannabis effects can take hours to wear off. Do not drive 4-8 hours after consuming (oral or inhaling) cannabis with THC.
- Cannabis high in THC can be addictive if used habitually. Choose products that contain CBD.

Resources

- Health Canada – www.canada.ca – search Cannabis
- www.projectcbd.org – up to date CBD research
- <https://arthritis.ca/support-education/online-learning/medical-cannabis-and-arthritis> for further cannabis education
- Medical Clinics in Vancouver that will prescribe Cannabis
 - Canadian Cannabis Clinic – www.cannabisclinics.ca
 - Medical Cannabis Resource Centre Inc.- www.mcrci.com
 - Green Leaf Medical Clinic – www.greenleafmc.ca
 - Apollo Online Medical Clinic – www.apollocannabis.ca
- Medical Cannabis Dispensaries
 - Shoppers Drug Mart – www.cannabis.shoppersdrugmart.ca
 - The Medical Cannabis Dispensary – www.cannabisdispensary.ca
 - For CBD only products – www.cbdprime.life