

# Medical Cannabis: Information for Patients

Pursuant to Iowa code Chapter 124E.3b, prior to certification of patient's qualifying condition for enrollment in Iowa's Medical Cannabidiol program, "a certifying provider must provide explanatory information as provided by the department to the patient about the therapeutic use of medical cannabidiol and the possible risks, benefits, and side effects of the proposed treatment." Discussing this document with prospective patient's satisfies this legal requirement.

## **What is "medical cannabidiol" or medical cannabis?**

In Iowa, "Medical cannabidiol" refers to the use of cannabis- or cannabinoid-based products for the treatment of qualifying debilitating medical conditions.

## **Who can receive a medical cannabis registration card?**

Iowa's medical cannabis program allows eligible individuals to purchase cannabinoid products for certain debilitating medical conditions. A complete list of qualifying debilitating medical conditions can be found at <https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/medical-cannabis/patients-caregivers>.

- Cancer with certain qualifiers
- Seizures
- Crohn's disease
- Chronic pain
- Multiple Sclerosis with severe and persistent muscle spasms
- AIDS or HIV
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- Parkinson's disease
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Any terminal illness with a probable life expectancy of under one year
- Ulcerative colitis
- Severe, intractable autism with self-injurious or aggressive behaviors
- Corticobasal degeneration

## **What is a cannabinoid?**

Cannabinoids are naturally occurring chemicals found in plants, such as cannabis, and even in some animals. There are over 100 different cannabinoids, some of which may help alleviate symptoms in various medical conditions.

## What is CBD?

Cannabidiol (CBD) is a non-psychoactive cannabinoid from the cannabis plant. It is studied for its potential therapeutic effects, including reducing inflammation, seizures, anxiety, and nausea. Most users find CBD to be well-tolerated with minimal side effects.

## What is THC?

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is another cannabinoid found in cannabis that may help with certain medical conditions. Unlike CBD, THC is psychoactive, meaning it can alter mood and perception of the environment. THC's effects, at low doses, may be mitigated or reduced when combined with CBD. It is commonly studied for managing pain and nausea.

## What are the potential health benefits of CBD, THC, and other cannabinoids?

Research suggests that these cannabinoids may be beneficial for conditions like seizures, chronic pain, inflammation, anxiety, and nausea. Research quality in the medical uses of cannabis is limited, though, because of many variables (legal status of cannabis by state, small number of research participants, other variables that are hard to control in a research study, etc.). The use of medical cannabis should be based on a healthcare provider's recommendation.

## How are CBD, THC, and other cannabinoids used?

In Iowa, medical cannabis products can be used in various forms, such as oral capsules, tinctures, creams, vapors, or suppositories. The form and route of administration may depend on the medical condition and individual preference.

## **Potential Side Effects and Special Considerations**

### CBD

CBD is generally considered safe. Common side effects of THC may include:

- Fatigue or drowsiness
- Diarrhea
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Dry Mouth

Special considerations for use of CBD:

- CBD is not recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding due to limited safety data.
- CBD can interact with medications metabolized by the liver. Consult your healthcare provider if you take medications like certain antibiotics, antiepileptics, anticoagulants, immunosuppressives, and antidepressants.

## THC

The most common side effects of THC use include:

- Impaired attention or short-term memory
- Drowsiness or dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Nausea
- Euphoria and mood changes
- Increased appetite
- High doses may cause anxiety, panic, paranoia, or confusion

Special considerations for use of THC:

- Avoid using THC during pregnancy or breastfeeding due to potential risks.
- Use THC cautiously in individuals with a history of psychiatric disorders or children, as it may affect brain development.
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery until you know how THC affects you.
- Metabolites of THC may be detectable in the body for up to 30 days. Using medical cannabis may cause a positive drug test. Patients should be aware that Iowa maintains a zero-tolerance THC policy for operating a vehicle, and patients are not afforded an affirmative defense for OWI.
- THC may interact with medications such as antipsychotics, anticoagulants, sedatives, immunosuppressives, and certain antibiotics. It can also interact with alcohol, potentially increasing THC's effects. Always consult your healthcare provider before combining THC with other substances.

## Products containing both CBD and THC

- Avoid use if you have a known allergy or hypersensitivity to cannabis.
- Use with caution in individuals with severe heart, liver, kidney, or immune conditions.
- Cannabis products may exacerbate certain heart conditions, like arrhythmias.

## Before using medical cannabis:

Consider the potential benefits, side effects, and risks. The form (e.g., pill, oil, cream, vapor) and dosage may vary based on the condition or how the product is meant to manage symptoms. Discontinue use and consult your healthcare provider if you experience any adverse effects.

**Note:** *This document is intended for informational purposes and may be updated as new scientific research and clinical guidelines become available.*

## References

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