

# Important information about medical cannabis

## Things to know

### What is medical cannabis?

- Medical cannabis is a treatment that comes from the cannabis plant and uses the chemicals THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (cannabidiol).
- Each state decides individually if they should make medical cannabis legal. Utah decided to legalize medical cannabis in 2018.

### Medical cannabis research

- Research is still being done on medical cannabis to figure out which medical conditions it can help and the best ways to use it.
- You should work closely with your medical provider and the medical cannabis pharmacist to find out what will work best for you.
- Learn more about medical cannabis research at <https://medicalcannabis.utah.gov/resources/cannabinoid-product-board/#crrb-documents>.

### Start low, go slow

- Start with a low amount of medical cannabis and add more slowly over time, until you reach a dose that works well for you.
- You may want to buy small amounts the first few times you visit a medical cannabis pharmacy until you learn which products work best for you.
- Your medical provider and the medical cannabis pharmacist can help you decide which products to try and how much to use at a time.
- Write down the products you use and any side effects you have. Share these with your medical provider or the medical cannabis pharmacist. You can use a tracking journal, like this one at <https://medicalcannabis.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Patient-Tracking-Journal.pdf>.

## Medical cannabis and other medications

- Always tell your medical provider and the medical cannabis pharmacist about any other medications you use.
- If you are getting anesthesia or sedation, cannabis can increase the amounts of anesthesia or sedatives that you need.
- Some medications, like Warfarin (Coumadin), need a lot of follow-up with a medical provider when they're taken with medical cannabis.
- **Do not** take medical cannabis with Cilostazol (Pletal), Clopidogrel (Plavix), Clobazam (Onfi or Sympazan), or Citalopram (Celexa).
- **Do not** take medical cannabis with anything that makes you feel tired, like alcohol, sleep medicine, or allergy medicine.

## Side effects

### Common side effects

- The most common side effects of medical cannabis are feeling dizzy, tired, lightheaded, nauseous, and having dry mouth. These side effects are mostly mild and only last a few hours.
- The product you use, the amount you take, and other medications that you use can change the side effects you have.
- Talk to your medical provider, a medical cannabis pharmacist, or call the Utah Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 if you have questions about side effects.

### Dependence and addiction

- You can become addicted or dependent on cannabis.
- Addiction and dependence is more likely if you use high-THC products every day or if you have had a drug addiction in the past.
- You may have withdrawal if you use cannabis every day and then stop suddenly.
- Learn more about cannabis dependence and addiction at <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/addiction.html>.

## Nausea and vomiting

- Some people have severe vomiting, nausea, and stomach pain. This can happen every 1 to 3 weeks while using medical cannabis. If this happens to you, stop using it and talk to your medical provider right away.

## Responsible use

### Wait to drive or use machinery

- It's **not** safe to drive or use machinery after using medical cannabis because it affects your reaction times, motor skills, and attention.
- Wait at least 8 hours after taking medical cannabis by mouth and at least 6 hours after inhaling medical cannabis into the lungs before driving or using machinery.
- Learn more about why it's important to wait to drive or use machinery after using cannabis at <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/driving.html>.

### Store it safely

- Medical cannabis needs to be stored safely, just like any medicine.
- This will keep your family, friends, and pets safe from using it by mistake.
- Keep it in its original package that has warning labels and is child-resistant.
- Put it away right after using it and store it in a child-proof container that is out of kids' sight and reach.
- Keep the Utah Poison Control Center phone number (1-800-222-1222) in case of an emergency.

### Use legal types

- Only use the types of medical cannabis that are available to purchase in a medical cannabis pharmacy.
- You can vape unprocessed flower, but it's illegal to smoke or burn it.
- The Utah Clean Air Act says that you **can't** vape medical cannabis in public, both indoors or outdoors, **unless** it is a medical emergency.
- Cannabis products that look like cookies or brownies are illegal.

## Don't share it, sell it, or give it away

- **Do not** share, sell, or give away medical cannabis.
- If you do, you could face criminal charges, fines, and have your medical cannabis card taken away.

## When cannabis may not be a good option for you

### Heart or liver disease

- Cannabis makes your heart rate and blood pressure higher, which puts you at a higher risk of a heart attack if you already have heart disease.
- Cannabis is broken down in your liver. You may have different side effects if you have liver disease.

### Young adults, teenagers, and kids

- Your brain is still developing before age 21, and cannabis can affect your brain development.
- Because your brain is still developing, you'll need to work closely with your medical provider when using medical cannabis. Cannabis can make it harder to focus and you could experience a decrease in motor skills, making school and social situations harder for you.
- Cannabis use among young people has also been shown to increase the risk for mental health concerns, like depression and social anxiety.
- Learn more about how cannabis could affect your developing brain at <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/teens.html>.

### Pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Using medical cannabis during pregnancy can cause low birth weight, premature birth, and affect your baby's brain development.
- THC is transferred to your baby through breast milk when you are breastfeeding, which can affect your baby's brain development and their growth.
- Organizations like the CDC, AAP, and MotherToBaby tell moms not to use cannabis during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

- CDC guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/pregnancy.html>.
- AAP guidelines:  
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/prenatal/Pages/Marijuana-Use-During-Pregnancy-Breastfeeding.aspx>.
- MotherToBaby guidelines:  
<https://mothertobaby.org/pregnancy-breastfeeding-exposures/cannabis/>.

## Mental illness

- Talk to your medical provider before using cannabis if you or any of your family members have had hallucinations, paranoia, schizophrenia, or schizoaffective disorder. Using cannabis can make these conditions and symptoms worse, especially if it's used every day or nearly every day.
- Some people have depression, social anxiety, or thoughts of suicide when using cannabis. Talk to your medical provider immediately if you experience these while using cannabis.
- Always tell your medical provider about all mental health concerns that you have before you start cannabis and while you're using it.
- Learn more about how cannabis can affect your mental health at <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/mental-health.html>.