



# CANNACADE

Promoting Responsible Cannabis Use Through Education

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## Treatment Guide for Medical Cannabis

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### Introduction

Medical cannabis refers to the use of cannabis products to treat disease and manage symptoms. It contains cannabinoids that interact with the body's endocannabinoid system.

The cannabis plant has two main species - Cannabis indica and Cannabis sativa. There are also hybrid strains. The main active compounds are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

Medical cannabis can be administered orally, sublingually, topically, rectally or by inhalation. It has been used to treat a variety of conditions but clinical evidence is still limited.

### Evidence and Uses

There is moderate evidence for chronic pain, spasticity, nausea, and sleep disorders. However, further robust clinical trials are needed to establish strong evidence for other uses.

Common uses include symptom management in cancer, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, seizures, PTSD, anxiety, arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease. Evidence is mostly anecdotal.

## Dosing and Administration

No standard dosing exists. Providers recommend starting low and going slow. Effects are highly individualized based on strain, patient condition, and method of use.

Vaporized cannabis results in the fastest onset and easier titration. Oral administration has slower onset and longer duration. Topicals target localized symptoms.

Patients should track symptoms and adjust dose/frequency to optimize effects while minimizing side effects. Cannabis pharmacists can provide guidance.

## Safety and Side Effects

Most common side effects are drowsiness, dizziness, euphoria and dry mouth. Rare risks include anxiety, paranoia, hypotension, and tachycardia.

Cannabis can interact with certain medications through the cytochrome P450 system. Effects on other drugs and during chemotherapy are not well studied.

Use is not advised during pregnancy or breastfeeding due to potential effects on fetal/child development and lack of safety data. Psychiatric risks may exist with heavy use.

## Key Points for Clinicians

Discuss risks, benefits and alternatives to medical cannabis use. Establish treatment goals and follow-up to assess efficacy and side effects.

Provide education on dosing, delivery methods and side effects. Recommend starting slowly and adjusting dose to meet treatment goals.

Caution about limited regulation and quality control. Advise patients to use legally obtained, lab-tested products from licensed dispensaries only.

Stay informed on the evolving legal and clinical research landscape for medical cannabis.

# Sources

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Kennedy Sheldon, L., **2017**. **Cannabis Guidelines**. Clin J Oncol Nurs 21, 409.  
<https://doi.org/10.1188/17.CJON.409>

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