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lift

CANNABIS 101
PATIENT GUIDE

Intro to Lift

Lift is the meeting place and national voice of Canada's cannabis industry. Founded as a blog in 2014, we have since evolved into an industry leader, providing authoritative and exclusive information about licensed producers and clinics across the country.

Through our cross-country events (Lift Expos), comprehensive cannabis rewards program (Lift Rewards), provincial medical resource centres (Lift Resource Centres), our online platform (Lift.co) and our publication (Lift magazine), Lift empowers Canadians to make more informed decisions about cannabis.

Please visit: lift.co for more information, including coverage and reviews of over 20,000 strains, as well as the latest in cannabis industry news, research and information.

After reading this guide, please also visit: lift.co/advice to read our advice forum and reach out about any questions you may have.

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Knowledge and best practices in the field of study described herein are constantly changing. As new research and experience broadens our knowledge, changes are required. Readers are advised to confirm the information contained herein with other sources and are advised to check the most current information available.

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The information contained in these materials does not in any way constitute a complete discussion of the diagnosis, treatment or implications of medical conditions that may cause, contribute to, or result from the conditions described. The information in this material cannot and should not be relied on. If in any doubt, medical advice should be sought forthwith.

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Basics

In this section you will learn about the symptoms cannabis can treat, the symptoms it may treat, and the precautions doctors will consider before prescribing cannabis.

What symptoms can cannabis treat?

Years of prohibition challenged cannabis researchers, who couldn't access the plant to study it and its effects on patients. As laws change and prohibition fades, scientists are starting to catch up and offer data to support—and refute—centuries of anecdotal evidence.

Some jurisdictions provide a master list of qualifying conditions for a medical cannabis prescription, but in Canada the process is individualized, and patients work with doctors or nurse practitioners to determine whether cannabis therapy is appropriate.

In the U.S., a comprehensive report from the National Academies of Science (NAS) examined over 10,000 research papers available on cannabis¹, offering a benchmark for medical cannabis knowledge.

According to the NAS report, the top conditions that can conclusively be treated with cannabis are:

- chronic pain in adults
- chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting
- multiple sclerosis spasticity or continuous muscle contraction

The NAS also found moderate evidence that medical cannabis is useful for improving sleep, especially for patients with:

- obstructive sleep apnea syndrome
- fibromyalgia
- chronic pain
- multiple sclerosis

Health Canada also lists the following conditions as potentials for cannabis therapy, with varying levels of supporting evidence²:

- amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
- anxiety and depression
- arthritis
- asthma
- bladder dysfunction associated with multiple sclerosis or spinal cord injury

- central and peripheral chronic neuropathic pain (various etiologies)
- chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting
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- palliative care
- Parkinson's disease
- sleep disorders
- spinal cord injury
- wasting syndrome (cachexia, e.g., from tissue injury by infection or tumour) and loss of appetite (anorexia) in AIDS and cancer patients

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, "The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids: The Current State of Evidence and Recommendations for Research," <https://www.nap.edu/read/24625/chapter/1> (2017)

² Health Canada, "Information for Health Care Professionals," <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/med/infoprof-eng.php#chp40> (2013)

³ Current research on cannabis's impact on anxiety and depression is conflicting, and very dependent on personal factors as well strain and dose particularities.



Are there any precautions?

Patients with certain underlying conditions may not be candidates for cannabis therapy.

According to Health Canada⁴, cannabis should not be used if you:

- are allergic to any cannabinoids (the active chemical components in cannabis) or to smoke
- have liver, kidney, heart or lung disease
- have a personal or family history of serious mental disorders such as schizophrenia, psychosis, depression or bipolar disorder
- are pregnant, planning to get pregnant or breast-feeding
- are a man who wishes to start a family
- have a history of alcohol or drug abuse or substance dependence

Additionally, cannabis consumers under the age of 25 may be at risk of brain development issues and are at an increased risk of developing a dependence. Most prescribing doctors will exercise extreme caution for patients in this age group⁵.

⁴Health Canada, "Consumer Information—Cannabis" <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/info/cons-eng.php> (2016)

⁵Kirsten Weir, "Marijuana and the Developing Brain," American Psychological Association, <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/11/marijuana-brain.aspx> (2015)

A person is seen from the side, sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. The room is dimly lit, with light coming from a window in the background, creating a bokeh effect. On the desk, there is a glass of water and a dark mug. The person's hands are on the laptop keyboard. The overall mood is quiet and focused.

Getting a prescription

Learn about the process of acquiring your prescription, the difference between dispensaries and licensed producers, and the details of registering with a licensed producer.

How can I legally obtain medical cannabis?

Currently, only patients with a valid medical cannabis prescription from a doctor or nurse practitioner may possess and consume cannabis in Canada.

Acquiring a prescription starts with a visit to a medical doctor or, in some provinces, a nurse practitioner. Once you have a prescription, your doctor will help you apply to a licensed producer (LP) by forwarding your information directly to them. Once approved, you will be able to fill your prescription through your LP, either online or by telephone, and then receive your order by mail or courier. Your first delivery will come with a card stating the details of your prescription, including its expiration date.

It's best to start the conversation with your family doctor, but be aware that some doctors say they struggle with prescribing medical cannabis due to a lack of research⁶. A history of stigma against cannabis further complicates the matter.

How can I prepare for my doctor's visit?

Prepare for your appointment by listing the treatments you have tried for your symptoms and how they helped, or didn't. If you are currently using cannabis, document how you are using it, how much you are using and how often you consume, as well as how it affects your symptoms.

Please see our Lift Resource Centre Intake Form in the printable forms section of this guide for a 'symptom tracker' you can fill and take to your appointment.

What if my doctor won't prescribe cannabis?

Cannabis may still be a viable option. Consider visiting a Lift Resource Centre (visit: liftcentre.ca for directions), or any one of the cannabis-aware doctors and clinics listed at: lift.co/doctors.

What's a licensed producer?

Medical cannabis is legal in Canada under the Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations (ACMPR). The ACMPR designates licensed producers (LPs) as the exclusive suppliers of legal medical cannabis in Canada. LPs are large-scale commercial growers that have been licensed through an extensive Health Canada process, and the medical cannabis they produce goes through rigorous testing to ensure safety and quality.

Stay up to date on the latest Canadian LPs here: lift.co/producers.

What's the difference between an LP and a dispensary?

LPs are the only legal, regulated source of medical cannabis in Canada. Dispensaries are storefront locations that operate outside of the legal regime and cater either to medical or recreational cannabis consumers. Dispensaries are not recognized by Health Canada and are technically illegal, although specific dispensaries in Vancouver and Victoria are regulated by those cities. Dispensary cannabis does not come from LPs, and is generally sourced from unregulated growing operations.

How do I choose an LP?

LPs vary wildly in terms of available products, pricing, processing and delivery times and customer service. We recommend reading Lift's list of LPs for detailed information and patient reviews. Please visit: lift.co/producers.

What if I want to go with multiple LPs or change my LP?

You can split your prescription between two or more LPs. In practice, this means you'll have multiple scripts for multiple LPs, each with its own monthly limit. By splitting your script, you can take advantage of varied strain selections and have backup in case of supply shortages. Ask your doctor or clinic about splitting your prescription.

How do I order my prescription cannabis?

Registering with an LP is a two-step approach: you'll fill out a personal information form, either on the instruction of your doctor or your LP, and your doctor will also submit a medical application. Once both have been processed, you can begin ordering. Processing times vary, but typically you'll receive your notice within 24-78 hours of getting your prescription. After that, it's simply a matter of following your LP's instructions to order online or by phone.

Will my health benefits cover my cannabis prescription?

Some insurers cover prescription cannabis as part of a health spending account. Check with your provider to be sure. Note that prescription cannabis is considered an eligible medical expense under Canada Revenue Agency ("CRA") guidelines, and can be claimed on your tax return.

Read more about CRA's eligible medical expenses. Visit: www.cra-arc.gc.ca/medical/



Using your prescription

In this section you'll learn which medical cannabis products are available, how to choose the strains and products that suit your needs, how to manage dosing, how to store your cannabis and how to monitor potential side effects.

What's available?

At this time, LPs are allowed to produce and sell cannabis in two forms: dried flower (also known as bud) and oil.

What's not available?

Cannabis comes in many forms, from highly-concentrated products such as shatter, wax and Rick Simpson Oil (RSO), to edibles, topicals, transdermal patches and more. None of these products are available legally through LPs, but you may use your prescription flower or oil to create your own. However, many concentrates require extensive knowledge and training to produce safely.

You'll find a list of topical and edible options in the DIY section of this guide on page 11.

How do I choose the right strains or oils for my condition?

Each cannabis product presents a unique combination of ingredients that influence its impact, including cannabinoids—active ingredients like THC and CBD—and terpenes, plant oils that contribute to scent, flavour and effect. More importantly, every person will react differently depending on the idiosyncrasies of their endocannabinoid system (more on that one later), as well as method of ingestion, tolerance—which can build or decrease over time—and more.

With all that in mind, finding the right strain for your condition may take some trial and error. Take a look at our 20,000-plus reviews by visiting: lift.co/reviews. Lift reviews are written by patients, and can be searched by symptom, condition, price, strength, LP and flavour.

As you try new products, consider also keeping a log of their effects so you can learn what works best for you. See our printable 'Patient Log' at the end of this guide for a sample.

How can I use my prescription flower?

There are three main ways to consume cannabis: by inhalation, ingestion or absorption through the skin.

Cannabis's active properties require heat to be properly

utilized. Usually this is achieved by smoking or vaporizing, but cannabis flower can also be heated in an oven, and used to infuse edible oils. Those oils can then be added to a variety of foods or turned into topical creams, lotions and salves.

Inhaling

Inhaling heated cannabis flower offers the quickest onset. If you choose to smoke or vaporize your cannabis, expect to feel its full effects within 10 minutes⁷, with onset often occurring within a few seconds. The impact of smoked or inhaled cannabis can last around four hours, although experiences vary dramatically depending on the strain and your tolerance.

If you choose to inhale, a vaporizer is thought to be the safest choice. A vaporizer heats cannabis to a temperature high enough to release its active ingredients, but without burning the plant matter (which creates carcinogens).

Interested in vaporizers? Find Lift's tips for choosing the right vape here: <https://news.lift.co/choose-right-vaporizer/>

Smoking is a popular method, and includes consumption either by joint or devices like pipes and bongs. Smoking heats the cannabis far beyond the temperature required to activate its cannabinoids, or active chemical components, and may destroy some of them⁸. Smoking also produces carcinogens which may be harmful to the lungs, especially with chronic or long-term use.

How can I use my prescription oil?

Some cannabis patients appreciate the discretion of cannabis oils, which can be taken orally as is, mixed with juice or smoothies, added to recipes and eaten, or absorbed sublingually. Compared with smoking or vaporizing, it takes longer for the effects of prescription oil to kick in and longer for them to recede. Effects will generally be felt within 30 to 120 minutes, reaching their peak somewhere between two and six hours, and lasting up to eight hours and beyond⁹.

Ingesting

Ingesting cannabis is reported to feel more physical or analgesic than cerebral, although experiences vary widely depending on potency, dose and personal tolerance,

⁷ Grant, Atkinson, Gouaux and Wiley, "Medical Marijuana: Clearing Away the Smoke," <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3358713/> (2012)

⁸ Abrams, Vizos, Shade, Jay, Nelly, Benowitz, "Vaporization as a Smokeless Cannabis Delivery System: A Pilot Study," <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1038/sj.cpt.6100200/full> (2007)

⁹ MedReleaf, "Frequently Asked Questions," <https://medreleaf.com/faq> (accessed 2017)

among other factors.

If you're about to ingest prescription oil or cannabis-infused edibles for the first time, it's crucial to take your time: **start low and go slow**. A classic beginner misconception is to assume the ingested cannabis is not working and take more, only to experience a compounded effect one or two hours later.

Your doctor and LP are the best sources for dosing suggestions, but generally it's recommended to start with a dose of no more than 0.05 milligrams of THC, and to keep careful records of your experiences. (See our printable 'Patient Log' at the end of this guide for help.)

How do I determine the right dose?

Titration is the process of learning your effective dose while maximizing desired effects and minimizing undesired ones.

If there's one "rule" to effective titration, it's this: **start low and go slow**. Begin with a conservative dose, in a comfortable environment, at a convenient time. Be sure to wait for the full expected duration of onset before increasing the dose, and remember to track dosages and their effects.

Method of Ingestion	Onset	Peak Effect	Duration
Inhalation (smoking or vaporizing)	Immediately-20 min	1-1.5 hrs	+/-4 hrs
Sublingual application (oil under the tongue)	20-120 min	1-1.5 hrs	+/-6 hrs
Ingestion (oil, on its own or taken with/in food)	30-120 min	2-6 hrs	+/-8 hrs

What are my do-it-yourself (DIY) options.

Edibles

If you're a prescription cannabis patient, you have two accessible options for legally crafting your own edibles: use flower to infuse a base oil, such as coconut oil or butter, or add your prescription oil directly to recipes.

Making infused oils is a multi-step process: first you must decarboxylate, or heat, your bud to release its active properties, then you must infuse it in a fat, since cannabinoids are fat-soluble.

Crafting your own oils or butters is more economical than buying prescription oils, and creates opportunities to experiment with the flavour profiles of different strains.

However, unless you have access to a cannabis lab facility, it's nearly impossible to determine the potency of the final product when using homemade oils.

LP prescription oils are more expensive, but offer the advantage of accurate dosing. They also come in neutral flavours that are generally easy to mask.

Whether you use homemade or LP prescription oil, both can be ingested as is, or cooked and baked into dishes. Homemade infusions can be substituted for the same amount of regular butter or oil in any recipe, while prescription oils can be measured using the dosing tools provided by your LP (typically a dropper).

Helpful links and a few starter recipes:

Infusion basics:

news.lift.co/cannabis-cooking-101-3-tips-making-infusions/

Simple, strong butter recipe:

news.lift.co/cannabis-cooking-102-simple-strong-cannabutter/

Slow cooker butter and oils recipe:

news.lift.co/simple-slow-cooker-cannabis-butter-oil-infusions/

More recipes from Lift:

news.lift.co/category/cooking/

Topicals

Currently, Health Canada's strict guidelines do not allow LPs to provide ready-made topical products. However, you can use prescription flower or oil to craft your own.

Cannabis topicals—creams, lotions, bath salts and other products absorbed through the skin—are one of the most promising frontiers of the new cannabis landscape. Although research is limited, strong anecdotal evidence and a few early studies show that topicals offer pain-relieving, antibacterial and anti-inflammatory benefits. These topicals may be useful for treating conditions such as menstrual cramps, dermatitis, muscle pain and arthritis.

Many topicals contain tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the cannabinoid known for causing the cannabis high, but they are considered non-psychoactive because they activate the skin's endocannabinoid system without entering the bloodstream. Because topicals can be infused with other ingredients, patients may experience benefit from additional ingredients such as peppermint, lavender, etc.

30-second topicals recipe:

The simplest way to make your own topical is to mix one

to two milliliters of your prescription cannabis oil with your favourite lotion. Apply it to a small area for localized pain relief, or all over the skin for general relaxation. Talk to your doctor to see if this recipe might work for you, and remember: every person responds to cannabinoids differently, and it may take a few applications alongside medical guidance to discover what works best for you.

How should I store my cannabis?

Keep your prescription cannabis in its container, preferably in a dark, cool cupboard or shelf. As with all medications, be sure to store all cannabis products, including edibles and topicals, in a spot that cannot be accessed by children or pets.

How will I feel? How should I feel?

We can't say it enough: every person reacts differently to cannabis, and to different strains and products at different times. However, there are some generalizations we can make about cannabis and its effects.

The famous cannabis "high" is largely a result of THC, perhaps the plant's best-known chemical component (learn more on THC and other cannabinoids in the next chapter). Many recreational users seek out this psychoactivity, or feeling of being high, but it can also be therapeutic for some patients. Still, other patients may describe psychoactivity as a negative side effect.

The psychoactive effects of cannabis can be experienced in many ways. Here are some commonly reported reactions:

- a perception of enhanced senses (colours are brighter, music is more beautiful, food is more flavourful, friends are funnier, etc)
- a perception of space seeming larger
- a perception of time slowing
- analgesic effects/reduced pain
- euphoria
- focus on the present moment
- relaxation
- strong emotions

And here are some potential adverse reactions:

- anxiety or panic attacks
- changes in blood pressure leading to feeling faint or dizzy
- decrease in coordination
- drowsiness (somnolence)
- dry mouth
- forgetfulness

- impaired attention and psychomotor performance
- impaired short-term memory
- increased appetite
- increased heart rate (tachycardia), which could be experienced as anxiety
- nausea or vomiting, especially at high doses or when using concentrates
- paranoia or dysphoria
- red, dry eyes
- slow reaction times

The best strategy for avoiding negative effects is to start low and go slow, being mindful of the THC content in any given product. A cannabis product containing 100 milligrams of THC will produce more psychoactive effects than one with 10 milligrams of THC, regardless of other differences in chemical composition.

CBD, another important cannabinoid we discuss in the next section, can mitigate some of THC's less desirable effects, such as panic and anxiety, so seeking strains with higher CBD content, or strains with a balanced ratio of CBD to THC, may help avoid negative symptoms.

What if I experience negative side effects?

If you're experiencing mild or moderate adverse effects, find a comfortable place to rest, stay hydrated and remember the feeling will pass as your body processes the THC. Be sure to note the experience in your patient log and follow up with your prescribing doctor or nurse practitioner.

If you're feeling panicked, short of breath or otherwise incapacitated, call your healthcare provider or visit your nearest emergency room. Although no one has ever died from a cannabis overdose, symptoms that do not subside after cessation warrant immediate medical attention, especially if there are underlying medical issues or you take other medications (see page 11 for a table on typical duration of effects).

Can I become dependent?

Research shows that approximately one in 10 regular cannabis users will develop a dependence¹⁰—typically through heavy use. This is characterized by symptoms of withdrawal among people who stop using cannabis after regular consumption. Common symptoms of cannabis withdrawal include restlessness, nervousness, irritability, loss of appetite and difficulty sleeping. The risk of developing dependence is higher for those who start using cannabis regularly at an early age.

Although there may be overlap, dependence is not the same as addiction, which is characterized by inability to stop using a substance, even when it interferes negatively with one's life¹¹. Cannabis addiction manifests similarly to other substance dependence disorders, but is typically less severe¹². It is also relatively rare, and more likely to occur in people with previously existing risk factors for other forms of substance abuse, such as antisocial personality and conduct disorders¹³. Assessing risk factors for dependence and addiction is part of a doctor's due diligence when prescribing cannabis.

¹⁰ Crean, Crane and Mason, "An Evidence Based Review of Acute and Long-Term Effects of Cannabis Use on Executive Cognitive Functions," *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3037578/#R52> (2012)

¹¹ National Institute of Drug Abuse, "Is Marijuana Addictive?," <https://www.drug-abuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive> (2017)

¹² Budney, Roffmans, Stephens, Walker, "Marijuana Dependence and Its Treatment," *Addiction Science & Clinical Practice*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2797098/> (2007)

¹³ Joy, Watson, Benson, "Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base," http://medicalmarijuana.procon.org/sourcefiles/IOM_Report.pdf, Institute of Medicine, (1999)





Plant properties

Learn about the cannabis plant and how it interacts with the human body. Explore cannabinoids and their impact on the human endocannabinoid system. Learn the differences between sativa and indica, and the role terpenes play in therapeutic use.

What are cannabinoids?

The cannabis plant contains over 110 cannabinoids¹⁴, or active chemical components. When humans ingest cannabis, its cannabinoids interact with the natural endocannabinoid receptors in our bodies to profoundly impact mood, behaviour and health (more on the endocannabinoid system below). Let's break down the five primary cannabinoids and their corresponding acronyms:

THC

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is best known for supplying cannabis's euphoric and psychoactive effects and is also coveted for its painkilling properties. Studies show that THC can increase the effectiveness of opiate painkillers, allowing patients to take smaller doses¹⁵.

CBD

Cannabidiol (CBD) is celebrated for its anti-inflammatory and antispasmodic effects. On its own, CBD does not produce a psychoactive high. CBD is being studied as an alternative treatment for children with epilepsy and has been shown to inhibit the growth of cancer cells¹⁶.

THCA

When tetrahydrocannabinolic acid (THCA) is left to dry it becomes THC¹⁷. THCA itself is not psychoactive, but may contain some of THC's medical properties. Research into THCA is in its infancy, but it's being studied for its potential anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective and anti-neoplastic (or tumour-inhibiting) properties¹⁸.

CBN

Cannabinol (CBN) is created as THC ages and degrades¹⁹. On its own, CBN produces milder psychoactive effects than THC, but it can increase THC's psychoactive effects in patients. It is currently being studied for its potential to alleviate glaucoma symptoms, stimulate appetite, promote sleep and treat inflammation.

CBC

Cannabichromene (CBC) is another non-psychoactive component of cannabis, and the second-most abundant cannabinoid. CBC has piqued the interest of scientific communities for its strong antibacterial and moderate antifungal properties, and is being studied for its potential as an antidepressant.

What is the human endocannabinoid system?

It can be useful to imagine the human endocannabinoid system as a series of locks, and cannabinoids as the keys. These "locks" or cell receptors exist throughout the body and come in two varieties: CB1 receptors, located in the central nervous system, and CB2 receptors, more commonly found in immune cells, the gastrointestinal tract and peripheral nervous system.

Cannabinoids like THC and CBD are the active chemical components in cannabis, but the human body also produces its own endogenous cannabinoids, or endocannabinoids. The most famous endocannabinoid is a neurotransmitter called anandamide, a.k.a. "the bliss molecule." It's known to produce a state of happiness, and may be responsible for the so-called "runner's high," but it's also implicated in several other functions such as sleep, memory, fertility, motivation, pain and appetite.

As research into the endocannabinoid system progresses, some scientists have named clinical endocannabinoid deficiency as a potential disorder. This concept may explain the numerous and varied diseases and symptoms that are treatable with cannabinoids, although further research is needed to support it.

¹⁴ Oier Aizpurua-Olaizola, Umut Soydaner, Ekin Oztürk, Daniele Schibano, Yilmaz Simsir, Patricia Navarro, Nestor Etxebarria and Aresatz Usobiaga, "Evolution of the Cannabinoid and Terpene Content during the Growth of Cannabis sativa Plants from Different Chemotypes," https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292944730_Evolution_of_the_Cannabinoid_and_Terpene_Content_during_the_Growth_of_Cannabis_sativa_Plants_from_Different_Chemotypes, Journal of Natural Products (2016)

¹⁵ Maguire and France, "Impact of Efficacy at the μ -Opioid Receptor on Antinociceptive Effects of Combinations of μ -Opioid Receptor Agonists and Cannabinoid Receptor Agonists," Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4201274/> (2014)

¹⁶ Bandana Chakravarti, Janani Ravi and Ramesh K. Ganju, "Cannabinoids as therapeutic agents in cancer: current status and future implications," Oncotarget, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4171598/>, (2014)

¹⁷ Sirikantaramas, Morimoto, Ishikawa, Wada, Shoyama and Taura, "The Gene Controlling Marijuana Psychoactivity: Molecular Cloning And Heterologous Expression of Δ^1 -Tetrahydrocannabinolic Acid Synthase from Cannabis Sativa L.," <http://www.jbc.org/content/279/38/39767.full> (2004)

¹⁸ Guillermo Moreno-Sanz, "Can You Pass the Acid Test? Critical Review and Novel Therapeutic Perspectives of Δ^9 -Tetrahydrocannabinolic Acid A," Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research, <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/can.2016.0008> (2016)

¹⁹ Ethan B. Russo, "Taming THC: potential cannabis synergy and phytocannabinoid-terpenoid entourage effects," British Journal of Pharmacology, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3165946/> (2011)



What's the difference between sativa and indica?

The terms sativa and indica refer to different cannabis cultivars, and most accurately describe differences in plant appearance and geographical origins. Tall, narrow sativa plants are often described as having stimulating, uplifting cerebral effects. In contrast, shorty, bushy indica plants are alleged to have relaxing, sedating, bodily effects. Hybrids are often said to offer the benefits of both sativas and indicas.

It's worth noting that these commonly held distinctions between sativa and indica are a matter of great debate among cannabis researchers.

What are terpenes?

Terpenes are aromatic compounds that occur naturally in cannabis and other plants and determine whether a particular strain smells like lemon, pine, lavender, musk or otherwise. Research into terpenes is young, but promising, and scientists are discovering that terpenes themselves may contribute to cannabis's overall effects. Some terpenes, like citrusy limonene and linalool (also present in lavender) are known to have calming effects, while others like beta-caryophyllene, present in rosemary, hops and black pepper, activate CB2 receptors and act as non-psychoactive anti-inflammatories.



Cannabis in daily life

Learn tips for talking to friends and family about prescription cannabis, the laws governing possession limits for medical cannabis, best practices for travelling and storage, and considerations around work and driving.

How do I talk to my friends and family about my prescription?

Decades of prohibition mean there's still some stigma around cannabis, although research shows that attitudes are changing. Still, you may find yourself on the receiving end of some questions if you choose to be open with friends and family about your cannabis prescription.

Remember: your health and medical choices are between you and your doctor, and you don't need to justify them to anyone else. At the same time, legal cannabis prescriptions are relatively new in Canada, and many people are simply curious.

Some patients say they've received social support for their cannabis prescription after describing how it helps them, or after explaining its efficacy and side effects compared with other prescriptions.

Ultimately it's up to you how much, or how little, you want to explain to friends and family. If you wish to educate loved ones, but avoid a long conversation, remind them they can order their own copy of this guide at: lift.co/patients/guide. Our website, lift.co, also offers information for the canna-curious, with content put together for everyone from beginners to industry insiders.

Can I consume my prescription at work?

Employers in Canada have a legal duty to accommodate when a person has a need, or needs, based on any of the grounds of discrimination found in the Canadian Human Rights Act. In such cases, employers have a duty to accommodate up to a point of "undue hardship." One such ground is a disability, such as when medical cannabis is used to treat a disabling medical condition like epilepsy, chronic pain or post-traumatic stress disorder. Always consult with a lawyer and your employer first.

In general, employees in safety-sensitive positions must follow the same rules around impairment as they do with other drugs and prescriptions: namely, they should not be impaired while operating heavy machinery, driving, etc.

Is it safe to drive on cannabis?

No. You should not drive while experiencing the effects of cannabis, which is proven to impair cognition and motor skills. Mixing cannabis with other drugs, including alcohol, can further increase impairment.

Can I drink alcohol and consume cannabis at the same time?

Everybody is different and what might be relatively safe for one patient could be dangerous for another. Talk to your doctor to find out if mixing alcohol with cannabis is safe for you.

Recent evidence suggests that alcohol can increase cannabis's psychoactive effects²⁰. Furthermore, since cannabis may have antiemetic effects—in other words, it prevents vomiting—it could pose a danger to someone who's at risk of overdosing on alcohol.

Can I carry my prescription and accessories with me?

Yes, you can. Be sure to keep your prescription in its original packaging, and to have your LP card on hand.

Under Health Canada rules, individuals can carry 30 times their daily prescribed amount or less, up to a maximum of 150 grams. So, if you've been allotted two grams per day, you can possess your monthly dose of 60 grams. But if your doctor has prescribed you seven grams per day, you're not allowed to possess the entire month's supply.

Can I travel with my prescription cannabis?

Only within Canada. To avoid hassle, keep your prescriptions in their original containers. When flying, it's best to pack your cannabis in your carry-on luggage, alert security that you have it (or call ahead of time) and be ready to show your prescription documents and LP card.

Just remember, even with a valid prescription, travelling outside Canada with cannabis is illegal.

Can I grow my own cannabis?

Yes, you can grow your own legal prescription as long as you've been approved by Health Canada to do so. You can find the registration forms here:

www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/topics/production-cannabis-for-your-own-medical-purposes.html

²⁰ Hartman, Brown, Milavetz, Spurgin, Gorelick, Gaffney, Huestis, "Controlled Cannabis Vaporizer Administration: Blood and Plasma Cannabinoids with and without Alcohol," Clinical Chemistry, <http://clinchem.aaccjnls.org/content/early/2015/05/05/clinchem.2015.238287> (2015)



Printable Forms



Lift Resource Centre Intake Form

This is the form we use with incoming patients at Lift Resource Centres (www.liftcentres.ca). It may be useful to fill it in and bring to your first appointment with your GP, as you explore whether cannabis is the right medicine for you.

- 1. List all your medical condition(s)/symptom(s) and provide a detailed medical history.
Also specify the condition(s)/symptom(s) for which you would like to use medical cannabis.**

- 2. Explain all conventional therapies attempted to assist you with the management of your medical condition(s) in which you are seeking to use cannabis. Please explain how these treatments have not been successful.**

- 3. List the name, last date seen, and type of health care provider (doctor, chiropractor, therapist, psychologist, counselor, specialist, other) that you consult for your medical condition(s).**

4. Do you have or have you ever had any of the following medical conditions?

- | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma /
Lung Disease | <input type="checkbox"/> HIV / Aids | <input type="checkbox"/> Hepatitis | <input type="checkbox"/> Stroke |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heart Disease | <input type="checkbox"/> ADD / ADHD | <input type="checkbox"/> Cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Sclerosis | <input type="checkbox"/> Schizophrenia | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Kidney Disease |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | | |

5. Please list all prior surgeries:

6. Please list all your medications including dosage:

7. Please list any medications you are allergic to:

Do you currently use tobacco? if so, how many cigarettes per day?

Do you currently consume alcohol? if so, how many drinks per week?

8. Have you been evaluated by another physician for medical marijuana? If so, when were you evaluated? And by which physician?

9. Do you use marijuana to reduce or eliminate the use of any medication(s) that have been prescribed for your medical condition(s)? If yes, which medication(s) have you reduced or eliminated and why? Please include dosage details.

10. How often do you use marijuana? Please choose one: everyday, ever other day, 1-2 times a week, more than once a month, or other.

11. What is your preferred method of using marijuana? Please choose one: smoking, vaporizing, ingesting, or topical.

**12. How effective is marijuana for your medical condition? Please choose one: very effective, effective, somewhat effective.
How else does marijuana affect you?**

13. Do you regularly experience unpleasant/unwanted side effects of marijuana? If yes, please explain.

For your appointment, please bring:

- ***A valid provincial health insurance card.***
- ***Supporting documents such as prescription list and consultation notes regarding the treatments you've received. Otherwise you will be required to bring a confirmation of diagnosis and a prescription list/ record of treatments, as well as any other relevant documentation (ie. imaging reports, medical history forms, etc.).***



Patient Log

Already a medical cannabis patient? This form from Lift Resource Centre can help you track your consumption and find the most appropriate products, strains and doses.

Week	Times Used	Amount Used	Strain & Potency (THC/CBD %)	Effects of Cannabis Used
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				