



Patient & Family Guide
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Cannabinoid Analgesics for Pain Management

Aussi disponible en français : *Cannabinoïdes
pour le traitement de la douleur* (FF85-1792)



www.nshealth.ca

Cannabinoid Analgesics for Pain Management

This group of medicine is sometimes called ‘marijuana analgesics’ (painkillers) or ‘synthetic (man-made) cannabinoids’. The 2 most commonly used cannabinoid analgesics are:

- › Nabilone
- › Sativex®

Why have I been prescribed a cannabinoid analgesic?

Research has shown that there are naturally occurring cannabinoids in our body in much the same way that we have natural morphine-like analgesics (endorphins) in our body.

It was recently found that cannabinoids can also help pain caused by nerves that have been damaged or no longer work well. This type of pain happens in accidents or conditions such as multiple sclerosis, shingles, and diabetes.

Cannabinoids can also control nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) or vomiting (throwing up) and may be used for other medical purposes.

How much of this medicine do I take and how do I take it?

The amount to take depends on the type of medicine your doctor chooses for you.

The medicine is usually started at a low dose. Over time you may be told to take more. How fast the dose is raised may depend on any side effects that you have. Side effects will often lessen in about 1-2 weeks.

Sativex® is a medicine that you spray on your inner cheek or under your tongue. Nabilone comes in pill form.

This pamphlet is just a guide. Please talk to your healthcare provider about your questions. We are here to help you.

Are there any side effects?

Not everyone will have side effects and some side effects will get less over time.

Common side effects:

- › Dizziness
- › Sleepiness
- › Feeling 'high'
- › Having strange thoughts
- › Depression
- › Confusion or feeling 'mixed-up'
- › Dry mouth

Occasional side effects:

- › Blurry vision or dry eyes
- › Problems with memory
- › Hallucinations (seeing things that are not really there)
- › Flushing (sudden redness of the face, neck, and chest)

Are there any safety measures I should take?

- These medicines can change your thinking and physical abilities needed to carry out difficult tasks or make important decisions. **Do not drive a car, operate machinery (like a lawn mower), or do anything that you need to be alert for**, until the side effects of the medicine go away.

- **Do not take this medicine with alcohol, other medicines such as sedatives** (such as sleeping pills or medicines for your nerves/anxiety), or hypnotics, or other substances that can affect the nervous system without talking to your doctor.



- **Do not take if:**
 - › You have an allergy to marijuana-related products.
 - › You have a history of liver problems or a history of mental illness (such as psychosis, paranoia, panic, anxiety, or hallucinations).
 - › You have a heart or lung condition.
 - › You are pregnant or breastfeeding.

What if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. If it is near the time of your next dose, skip the missed dose and carry on with your usual dosing schedule. **Do not take a double dose to catch up.**

How do I store my medicine?

- Keep out of reach of children and pets. **A locked box is strongly recommended.**
- Store unopened spray bottles in a locked box in the fridge. Do not freeze. Opened spray bottles can be kept at room temperature. Unused spray bottles should be returned to your pharmacy after 28 days.
- Store pills at room temperature (15-30 °C) in a locked box in the package they came in. Return unused medications to your pharmacy so they can get rid of them safely.



