

Questions About Using Cannabis in the Hospital

NSHA facilities are smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free. Thank you!

How is cannabis used in the hospital system?

- Cannabis became legal to buy in Canada without a prescription in 2018. In Nova Scotia you must be over 19 years old to buy cannabis. Right now in the hospital system, there is no proof that cannabis helps with treating or curing any disease or health condition. There is a small amount of proof that it may help with specific symptoms of a disease or health condition. **This is a growing area of learning and research.**
- Although the use of cannabis for medical purposes has been supported for some time by Health Canada, legalization is fairly new and research is ongoing to explore its benefits. At the end of this handout there are links to resources to learn more about cannabis.
- It is important to tell your health care providers **if you are using cannabis for any reason.** Your health care providers need this information to help plan your care. They can also watch for side effects or interactions with other medications you are taking.

What is cannabis used for?

- The goal of using cannabis may be to help with **symptoms of a disease or health condition.** The goal of using cannabis may also be to **feel calm, get to sleep, or get high.** The same legal cannabis product can be used for different reasons.

Are there side effects to using cannabis?

Cannabis has been reported to have a number of side effects. We will learn more as more research is done. **Side effects or interactions between cannabis and other medical treatments or medications could be very serious or even life-threatening.**

Side effects may include:

- interaction with other medications
- confusion, anxiety, lowered inhibition
- lack of coordination (don't drive for up to 8 hours after using cannabis)
- dry mouth
- stomach pain, nausea, vomiting
- higher heart rate
- blood pressure changes
- blood glucose level changes
- sleepiness
- increased bleeding (if taking blood thinners)
- dizziness, light-headedness, or fainting

How can I access cannabis?

- Doctors and Nurse Practitioners (NP) are authorized to prescribe cannabis. A doctor or NP can write an authorization that goes directly to a licensed producer (or to Health Canada so a patient can grow their own). Patients receive cannabis through the mail from the licensed producer.
- Anyone of legal age can buy cannabis from the NSLC in person or online to use recreationally, or for a disease or health condition. This does not require an authorization from a doctor or NP. The licensed producers who send cannabis through the mail are the same licensed producers who supply cannabis to NSLC. The cannabis itself is the same product, used for different reasons.
- There are cannabis consultation clinics that are not part of the Nova Scotia health care system where a doctor or NP can prescribe it for you. You may need a referral to get an appointment and they may charge a fee.

What type of cannabis can I bring into the hospital?

- Because NSHA is smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free, only cannabis oil or capsules can be used in the hospital. If you are staying overnight in the hospital, you need to bring your cannabis oil or capsules in the original packaging.
- If you smoke or vape dried cannabis from NSLC or that was mailed to you from a Health Canada licensed producer, bring it in its original packaging that will contain the smell. You must leave hospital property to smoke or vape it.
- Cannabis from a dispensary or supplier is not allowed in the hospital. We don't know how strong the product is or if there's anything else in it that may not be safe for you or others. The only cannabis permitted for use in the hospital is from an authorized licensed producer or NSLC. The only legal way to buy cannabis in Nova Scotia is from NSLC (in person or online), or with an authorization from a doctor or NP sent directly to a licensed producer.

Learn more about cannabis here:

- › <https://library.nshealth.ca/Cannabis/Patients>
- › www.canada.ca/cannabis
- › www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/topics/cannabis-for-medical-purposes.html

*Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.
Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*
www.nshealth.ca

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The information in this handout is for informational and educational purposes only.
The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.