PATIENT HANDBOOK

A short guide to your medical cannabis treatment.

SANTĒ CANNABIS



WELCOME TO SANTÉ CANNABIS!

Santé Cannabis is Quebec's leading clinical and research center specializing in medical cannabis. Our mission is to deliver comprehensive, evidence-based care while advancing research and promoting education for both patients and healthcare professionals.

We are a multidisciplinary team of health professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, clinical educators, and mental health professionals supporting patients across Quebec.

This handbook was written by our staff as a handy reference to help you manage your health and medical cannabis treatment with confidence.

Inside you'll find:

- An introduction to medical cannabis
- Information about how medical cannabis can help treat your symptoms
- Advice on how to manage your treatment plan

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?
Book an appointment with a Clinical Educator online or by email
Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm
support@santecannabis.ca

Every health journey is different. Using our highly developed clinical expertise, we can help you navigate the map that fits best with your personal destination. We look forward to working alongside you!

- The Santé Cannabis Team

This document represents the general, internal practices of Santé Cannabis and is provided strictly as a supportive resource.

HOW MEDICAL CANNABIS WORKS

THE ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM

Our bodies have many different systems working together to keep us functioning such as the immune system and the cardiovascular system. The endocannabinoid system, or ECS, is an important regulatory system present throughout the body. It plays an important role regulating different activities in our bodies, including sleep, mood, appetite, metabolism and pain perception. Our bodies naturally produce compounds called endocannabinoids, which are active in our ECS. Certain health conditions may disrupt this system, contributing to a wide range of symptoms.

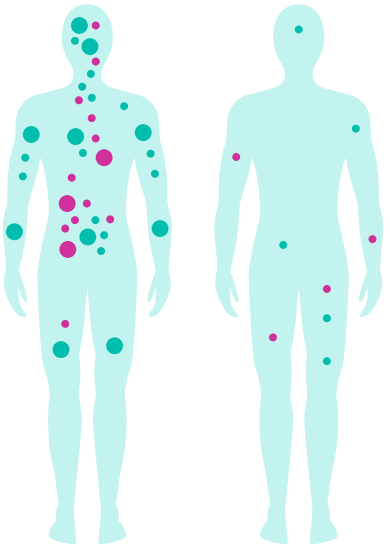
HOW CAN CANNABINOIDS HELP?

The cannabis plant produces phytocannabinoids similar to the endocannabinoids our bodies produce. Over 100 different plant cannabinoids have been identified, although the most well-known are THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (cannabidiol). These compounds can increase receptor activity and help restore balance within our ECS.

Terpenes are another type of plant compound that give different types of cannabis their distinct odours and flavours. Early research suggests that certain terpenes may also help support mood, sleep, and pain relief. For example, the terpene limonene has been associated with improvements in mood, while pinene has shown anti-inflammatory potential.

ENDOCANNABINOIDS' EXPRESSION

NORMAL DECREASED



CANNABINOIDS

Medical cannabis treatment is highly individualized. The wide range potential therapeutic benefits depend on selecting the appropriate cannabinoids, dosage, and formulation for each person's unique needs.

THC

- Reduces pain
- Reduces muscle spasms
- Helps with sleep disorders
- Relieves nausea and vomiting
- Increases appetite

CBD

- Reduces inflammatory pain
- Reduces muscle spasms
- May relieve anxiety or improve mood
- Can help reduce seizures
- Does not cause impairment

MINOR-CANNABINOIDS

Found in lower concentrations in the cannabis plant but possess distinct therapeutic potential. Now available in many medical cannabis products, often in combination with THC or CBD.

CBG

- Anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties
- May have anti-anxiety effects
- Non-impairing, similar to CBD

CBN

- Sedative properties, used as a potential sleep aid
- Very mild psychoactive effects

CBC

- Anti-inflammatory properties
- Potential mood improvement

THCV

- May suppress appetite
- May support blood sugar regulation



HOW TO TAKE YOUR MEDICAL CANNABIS TREATMENT

There exist many different options, we will recommend a personalized plan based on your needs:



ORALLY (BY YOUR MOUTH)

In the form of an oil extract, capsules, a spray or an edible.



INHALED

Smoking or inhaling cannabis vapour into your lungs and airways using a device called a vapourizer or vape pen.



TOPICAL

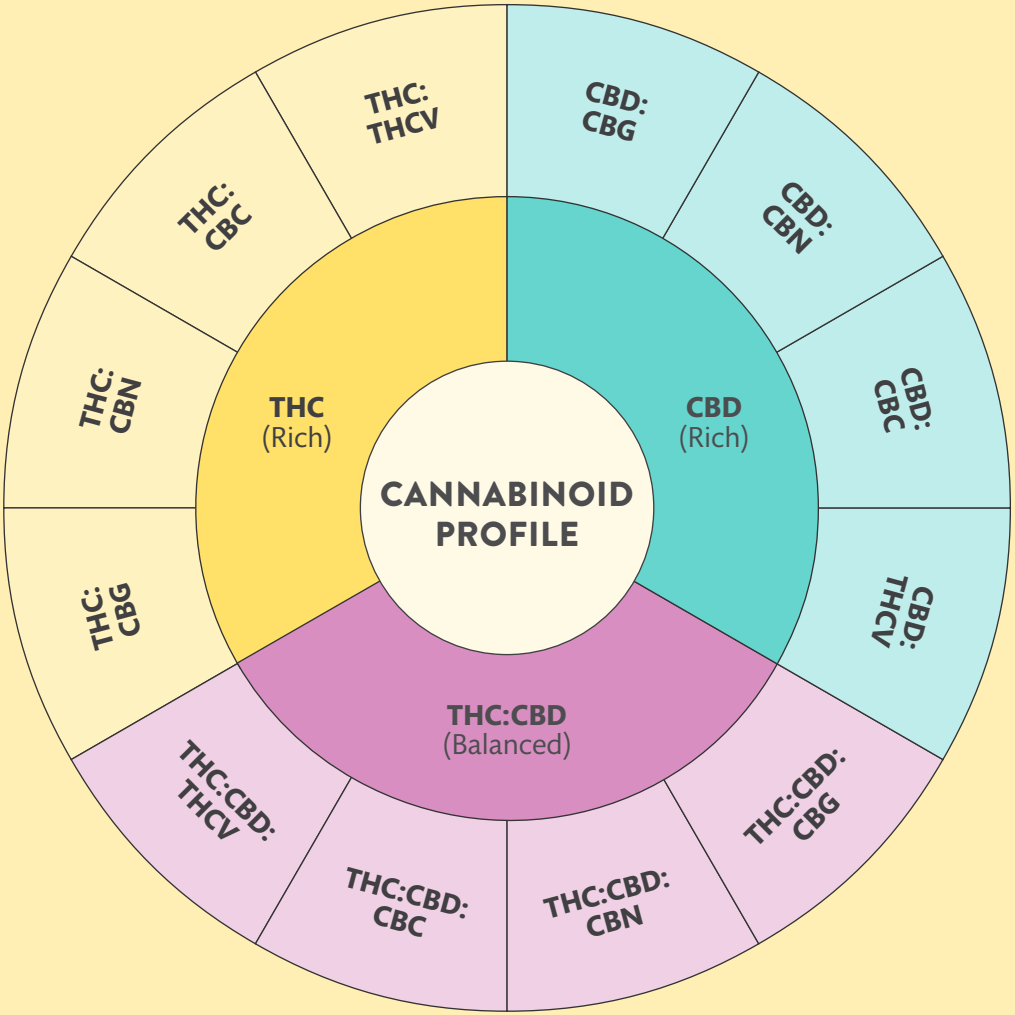
Cream, oil, or gel directly applied to the skin.



SUPPOSITORIES

Inserted in rectum or vagina – especially for patients who cannot tolerate ingested route methods.

Your treatment plan may include THC, CBD and other minor cannabinoids like CBN and CBG.



Each product format and cannabinoid formulation is selected based on your health goals.



Cannabis Extracts In Oil Form
Taken orally

Dosed by syringe or dropper, also available as a spray.

Feel Effects In:
1-2 hours

Duration:
4-8 hours



Cannabis Oil Capsules
Taken orally

Ingested.

Feel Effects In:
1-2 hours

Duration:
4-8 hours



Mouth Spray
Taken orally

Sprayed under the tongue or inside the cheek.

Feel Effects In:
30–60 minutes

Duration:
4-6 hours



Edible Products
Taken orally

Ingested.

Feel Effects In:
30-90 minutes

Duration:
4-8 hours



Dried Cannabis
Inhalation

Vaporised *(recommended)* or smoked.

Feel Effects In:
5-15 minutes

Duration:
2-4 hours



Vape Pens
Inhalation

Vaporised.

Feel Effects In:
5-15 minutes

Duration:
2-4 hours



Suppositories
Rectal, Vaginal

Inserted.

Feel Effects In:
15-60 minutes

Duration:
4-8 hours



Cream, gel, oil
Topical

Applied to the skin.

Feel Effects In:
30 - 90 minutes

Duration:
4 hours variable

INSURANCE COVERAGE

COVERAGE FOR MEDICAL CANNABIS HAS EXPANDED

Despite our advocacy efforts since 2014, medical cannabis products are not covered by the RAMQ. However, some private and public insurers now offer coverage for specific medical conditions.

Private insurance: such as Canada Life, Sunlife, Beneva
Public insurance: CNESST, IVAC
Benefits programs: Veterans Affairs Canada

Our team of Clinical Educators, which includes nurses, clinical specialists, and mental health professionals, is available to assist you with various aspects of your care.

CONTACT US FOR:

- Support to access patient pricing programs like compassionate discounts.
- Administrative support with insurance coverage process, like completing required forms.
- Administrative support for CNESST and IVAC forms.
- Other patient support and administrative services *(e.g., forms, legal letters, work-related documentation)* as needed. Fees may apply.

Did you know that certain cannabinoid-based products are available in pharmacies?
These products are regulated prescription drugs and may be eligible for coverage.

NABILONE (CESAMET®)

Covered by RAMQ

Capsule *(pill)* or syrup, contains synthetic THC-like molecule

NABIXIMOLS (SATIVEX®)

Not covered by RAMQ, very limited private coverage

Mouth spray, contains natural cannabis extract *(THC and CBD)*

EPIDIOLEX

Very limited coverage, for pediatric epilepsy conditions only

Oil extract, contains natural, purified CBD extract

All out of pocket costs for medical cannabis and cannabinoid-based products can be claimed on your income tax.

YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

You will be assessed by a physician or a nurse practitioner to review your medical history and current medications. Together, we will determine whether medical cannabis is right for you and define the most suitable treatment plan based on your needs.

YOUR SANTÉ CANNABIS EDUCATOR WILL

1. Review your treatment plan.

2. Provide you with general information about medical cannabis.

3. Describe when and how to take your medical cannabis.

4. Explain how to order your products

5. Help you register with a licensed seller *.

A licensed seller is a company authorized by Health Canada to sell cannabis for medical purposes.

YOUR PERSONALIZED TREATMENT PLAN

Your personalized treatment plan is developed by the Santé Cannabis medical team based on your symptoms, goals, medical history and cannabis experience *(if you have some)*.

You will receive your treatment plan by email, including:

- Your personalized recommended products;
- Your dosage and titration instructions.
- Registration instructions and your licensed seller's website and contact information to place your order.

Products are ordered directly from the licensed seller and are typically paid for by credit card and will be delivered to you by mail. Options for payment by other methods such as electronic *(Interac)* transfer are available.

YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

The diagram below explains how you can purchase your cannabis and have it delivered to you.



If you haven't received any news within one week after your first appointment, contact the licensed seller directly to ask about your file.

FOLLOW-UP AND CLINICAL EDUCATOR SUPPORT

A Santé Cannabis educator will call you a month after you have begun your treatment to assess your response and progress.

You will have regular follow-up appointments every 3 months until your treatment is stable.

We will update your referring practitioner about the treatment that was recommended for you, after your first visit, and as needed at follow-ups.

Once your treatment is stable, you might have a follow-up every 6 or 12 months or be offered to transfer your medical cannabis follow up to your referring practitioner.

Our clinical educator team is available by phone or email to answer your treatment or product-related questions. A phone appointment with an educator can be booked at your convenience.



Santé Cannabis offers a medical cannabis prescriber training and support program available free of charge for Quebec healthcare professionals. To find out more about the program visit ***santecannabis.ca/training***.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?

MOST COMMON SIDE EFFECTS:

- Drowsiness *(feeling sleepy)*
- Fatigue *(feeling tired)*
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Cough/mucus *(with inhaled cannabis)*
- **Feeling 'high' or intoxicated ***
- Nausea
- Anxiety
- Problems with decision-making or with attention
- Problems with coordination
- Changes in appetite
- Diarrhea *(with cannabis oil)*

FINDING THE RIGHT DOSE

Remember: Start low, go slow.

This means start with low doses and increase the amount slowly.
This approach will help you build a tolerance so that you will have fewer or milder side effects. We recommend keeping track of your treatment and symptom evolution in a daily journal.

**** Feeling "high" is a result of THC's effects on the brain and is not the intended outcome of medical cannabis treatment. Because higher doses can cause impairment or unwanted side effects, treatment should be individualized and carefully monitored.***



IF YOU HAVE MILD SIDE EFFECTS, YOU CAN:

1. Keep taking the same dose for a few more days and the side effects may stabilize.
2. Wait a longer period of time between dose increases. For example, if your
3. treatment calls for increasing the dose every 3 days, wait 5 days instead.
4. Reduce the dose during the day but continue using the same dose at night.
5. Lower your dose of THC.
6. Increase your dose of CBD.

IF YOU HAVE MODERATE SIDE EFFECTS, YOU CAN:

1. Reduce your dose.
2. Wait a longer period of time between dose increases.

IF YOU HAVE STRONG SIDE EFFECTS:

1. If your side effects are not tolerable, stop your treatment and go to the nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1, if required.
2. If your side effects are strong, but you can tolerate them, stop taking the treatment and contact a Santé Cannabis educator.

If you are ever unsure about what to do: stop taking your treatment and contact us.



PRECAUTIONS



IMPAIRMENT:

Cannabis (particularly with THC) is a psychoactive substance and may cause temporary impairment of motor functions, coordination, and cognitive function such as short-term memory or judgement. Cannabis may increase anxiety and/or paranoia.



DRIVING:

It is recommended that you wait at least 4 hours after inhaling cannabis and up to 8 hours after ingesting cannabis products before driving. In Canada, driving while impaired is prohibited. Patients are responsible for assessing their own fitness to drive, as impairment and recommended waiting times may vary based on individual metabolism and cannabinoid tolerance.



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DEPRESSANTS:

Cannabis mixed with alcohol or other depressants can cause the effects of each substance to be enhanced and can lead to unpleasant side effects. If you decide to drink alcohol and are taking cannabis, be sure to do it carefully, slowly and consider limiting the quantity you are taking. For instance, have only one glass of wine or a beer with a meal.



DRUG INTERACTIONS:

Significant interactions between other medications are uncommon, with the most important involving certain blood thinners (anticoagulants) and immunotherapy. Rest assured that your medications were reviewed during your appointment to ensure medical cannabis is appropriate for you. Do not change, reduce, or stop any of your prior medications without first consulting your prescribing physician or nurse practitioner, especially while your cannabis treatment is being adjusted.



HEART ISSUES:

Cannabis (particularly with THC) may cause temporary increases in heart rate coupled with decreased blood pressure. If you have cardiac or blood pressure issues, advise us during your appointment at Santé Cannabis, as medical cannabis may not be recommended in some cases.



PREGNANCY:

Prenatal exposure to cannabis may affect fetal and infant development. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you should not use cannabis unless advised otherwise by your doctor after careful evaluation of the potential risks and benefits.



PSYCHIATRIC EFFECTS:

Cannabis products that contain THC, especially in higher concentrations, may trigger a psychotoxic reaction in a small number of individuals. If you have a personal or family history of psychosis, schizophrenia, or bipolar I disorder, discuss it with your healthcare provider before starting treatment.

A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

While cannabis-based products may support the endocannabinoid system (ECS), they are not a standalone solution. They work best when combined with efforts to improve lifestyle habits. Our team encourages patients to take an active role in their care.

Practices such as regular physical activity, good sleep hygiene, balanced nutrition, mindfulness, stress management, psychotherapy, and participation in support groups can positively influence overall health and wellbeing. Research has shown that these activities even promote healthy function of the endocannabinoid system!

Building social connection and engaging in meaningful daily activities are also important parts of long-term health promotion. Every small change can make a significant difference.

Your new treatment and commitment to lifestyle changes can support ECS balance and keep symptoms under control over time.

If you would like support or additional resources related to sleep, nutrition, exercise, mental health, or community support services, please speak with one of our clinical educators, who can help guide you toward appropriate educational materials and resources.



MORE THAN A CLINIC

Supporting your health beyond your treatment plan.

At Santé Cannabis, we believe medical cannabis is just one part of comprehensive, patient-centred care. We offer additional programs and resources designed to support your health and well-being throughout your treatment journey.



GROUP SUPPORT & EDUCATION

Join educational workshops and peer support groups where patients can learn, ask questions, and connect with others navigating similar health conditions.



PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPY (PAT)

An exciting new treatment for mental health conditions, psychedelic-assisted therapy requires comprehensive support from a multidisciplinary team. Our PAT Program offers education, screening, preparation, treatment support, and integration in collaboration with experienced therapists across Quebec. Service fees apply for this program, contact our reception team to find out more.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Throughout the year, our team participates in conferences, public lectures, webinars, and community events to promote evidence-based education and reduce stigma around cannabinoid medicine.

Make sure to sign up to our community newsletter to keep an eye out for these announcements.

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL CANNABIS

Research is at the heart of everything we do.

You will be assessed by a physician or a nurse practitioner to review your medical history and current medications. Together, we will determine whether medical cannabis is right for you and define the most suitable treatment plan based on your needs.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

- Help improve care for future patients
- Advance scientific knowledge
- Contribute to safer and more personalized treatment
- Many studies involve only questionnaires and routine follow-up visits

YOUR PRIVACY MATTERS

Participation in research is always voluntary. Your information remains confidential, and your decision to participate—or not—**will never affect your treatment or the care you receive at Santé Cannabis.**

Interested?
Ask your healthcare provider whether you may be eligible for one of our research studies.

Every patient who participates helps advance cannabinoid medicine.

Click the link to learn more.
santecannabis.ca/en/participate-in-research/

NOTES

To connect with other patients, get the latest news and find out more about what Santé Cannabis does:

@santecann
@santecannabis
Santé Cannabis

SANTECANNABIS.CA

Sign up to our newsletter for events, clinic and research updates and more.

santecannabis.ca/newsletter

SANTÉ CANNABIS

CONTACT US

Patient Support is available Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

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