



**SANTÉ**  
CANNABIS

# **PATIENT HANDBOOK**

*A short guide to your medical cannabis treatment*

# WELCOME TO SANTÉ CANNABIS!

Santé Cannabis is a medical clinic dedicated to treatment of symptoms and conditions using cannabis. We also work to improve patient care by conducting clinical research and developing training programs for patients and healthcare professionals about medical cannabis.

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?

Contact us to book an appointment with a nurse.

**Monday-Saturday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**

**support@santecannabis.ca**

**1-844-419-4131**

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



@santecannabis



@santecann



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Santé Cannabis

## 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 internal practices of Santé Cannabis and is provided strictly as a supportive resource.***

# HOW MEDICAL CANNABIS WORKS

## THE ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM

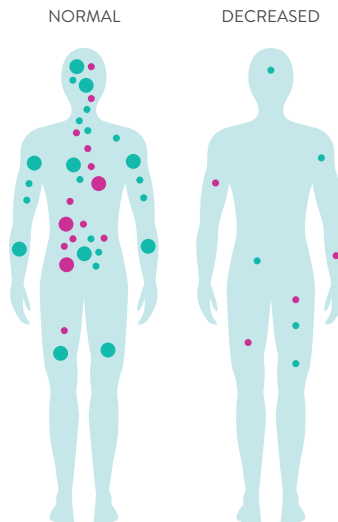
Our bodies have many different systems working together to keep us functioning such as the immune system and the cardiovascular system. The endocannabinoid system, or ECS, is one of the lesser known systems of the body. The ECS plays an important role regulating different activities in our bodies, including sleep, mood, appetite, metabolism and pain perception. Health problems can affect our ECS and cannabis may contain compounds that can help.

## HOW CAN CANNABINOIDS HELP?

Our bodies produce natural compounds called endocannabinoids, compounds that are active in our Endocannabinoid System (ECS). The cannabis plant produces cannabinoids that are similar to the ones our body produces. Over 100 different plant cannabinoids have been identified, although the most well-known are THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (cannabidiol). THC and CBD can be used to help restore balance within our ECS.

Terpenes are another type of plant compound that give different types of cannabis their distinct odors and flavors. Terpenes may help control pain, anxiety or sleep. For example, the terpene *limonene* has been associated with improvements in mood, while the terpene *pinene* may help reduce inflammation. Further research is needed to determine which terpenes play a role in improving or controlling symptoms.

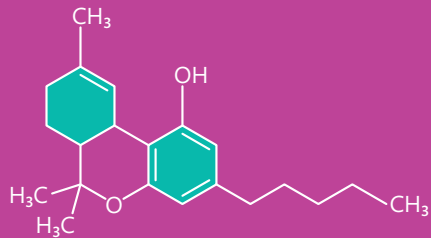
## ENDOCANNABINOID EXPRESSION



Here are some of the ways that THC or CBD can help with symptoms you may be experiencing.

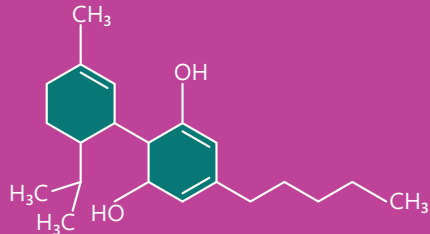
### THC

- Reduces pain
- Reduces muscle spasms
- Helps with sleep problems (like insomnia)
- Relieves nausea and vomiting
- Increases appetite



### CBD

- Reduces inflammatory pain
- Reduces muscle spasms
- Relieves anxiety or depression



***\*CBD does not cause sensations of euphoria (being high), whereas THC can have this effect, especially at high doses.***

## HOW TO TAKE YOUR MEDICAL CANNABIS TREATMENT

***There are three main ways you can take your cannabis treatment:***

1. Orally (by your mouth) in the form of an oil extract, capsules, or with a spray.
2. By inhaling cannabis vapour into your lungs and airways using a device called a vapourizer.
3. Topically (applied to the skin, eyes or rectum) in the form of a cream, oil, skin patch, eye drops or suppository. More scientific research is needed to determine how efficient these alternative forms of treatment really are.

## INHALATION: VAPOURIZATION VS SMOKING

One advantage of inhaling medical cannabis is that the effects are felt quickly, usually within minutes. Vapourizers are devices that heat cannabis at a low temperature, versus the high temperature required for smoking. This low temperature stops the cannabis from burning and produces vapour instead of smoke which can contain harmful chemicals.

**Your cannabis treatment plan may include THC, CBD or a mixture of both.**



## AT THE PHARMACY: CESAMET® & SATIVEX®

Did you know that certain cannabis products are already available in pharmacies? These products are regulated by the pharmaceutical industry and are authorized by Health Canada for sale in pharmacies by prescription.

### NABILONE (CESAMET®)

- Capsule (pill) or syrup
- Contains synthetic THC
- Prescribed to improve nausea
- Can help with pain or sleep
- Partially covered by the RAMQ drug insurance plan and some private insurance plans

### NABIXIMOLS (SATIVEX®)

- Mouth spray
- Contains natural cannabis (THC and CBD)
- Prescribed for muscle spasms in Multiple Sclerosis
- Can help with pain
- Not covered by the RAMQ drug insurance plan
- May be covered by private insurance

# WHAT TO DO ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?

## MOST COMMON SIDE EFFECTS:

- Drowsiness (feeling sleepy)
- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Cough/mucus (with smoked cannabis)
- Feeling 'high' or 'stoned' (usually with high doses of THC)
- Nausea
- Anxiety
- Problems with decision-making or with attention
- Problems with coordination
- Change in appetite
- Diarrhea (with cannabis oil)

### MILD



### MODERATE



### STRONG



## 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.

Your Santé Cannabis nurse will explain to you how much cannabis you should use and when to increase your dose. You will also receive a journal to keep track of your doses.

### IF YOU HAVE MILD SIDE EFFECTS, YOU CAN

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

### IF YOU HAVE STRONG SIDE EFFECTS:

1. If your side effects are not tolerable, go to the nearest emergency room.
2. If your side effects are strong, but you can tolerate them, stop taking the treatment and contact a Santé Cannabis nurse.

**It's better to be safe than sorry! If you are experiencing strong effects that are not manageable call 9-1-1 and/or go to the emergency room.**

***If you are ever unsure about what to do: stop taking your treatment and contact your Santé Cannabis nurse.***

# YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

## YOUR SANTÉ CANNABIS NURSE WILL:

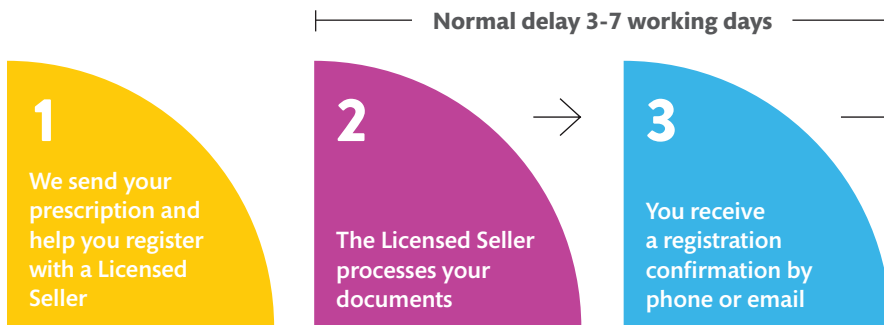
1. Go over your treatment plan.
2. Provide you with general information about medical cannabis.
3. Explain when and how you should take your medical cannabis product and how much you should use.
4. Explain how to get your product (from a Licensed Seller).\*
5. Help you register with a Licensed Seller.

***\*A Licensed Seller (formerly called a Licensed Producer) is a company that is authorized by Health Canada to sell cannabis for medical purposes.***

## WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

### ***Once you have a treatment plan:***

The diagram below explains how you can purchase your cannabis and have it delivered to your home once the Licensed Seller has received your medical document.



***If you haven't received any news 7 to 12 working days after your first appointment, contact the Licensed Seller directly to ask about your file.***

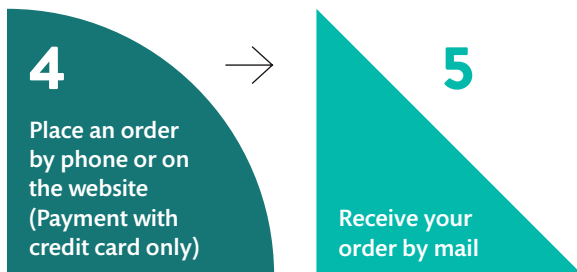


## FOLLOW-UP

1. You will have regular follow-up appointments with your Santé Cannabis doctor every 3 months until they decide your treatment is stable.
2. We will update the doctor who referred you to Santé Cannabis about the treatment that was recommended for you after every visit.
3. Once your treatment is stable, you might have a follow-up every 6 or 12 months or be transferred back to your referring doctor.

*Santé Cannabis offers a medical cannabis prescriber training and support program available free of charge for Quebec doctors. To find out more about the program or to tell your doctor about it, visit [santecannabis.ca/training](https://santecannabis.ca/training).*

Normal delay 2-3 working days



# 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.

## **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 INTERACTION:**

Significant interactions between cannabinoids and other medications are few. Rest assured, we have reviewed your medication during your appointment and have determined if it is safe for you to take cannabis. Start your treatment slowly. As long as your cannabis treatment isn't stabilized, you should not consider changing your usual medication neither should you change dosage or stop any medication without first discussing with your prescribing physician.

## **DRIVING:**

Medical cannabis can cause impairment. It is recommended that you wait at least 4 hours after inhaling cannabis and 8 hours after ingesting oral cannabis preparations before driving and/or operate heavy machinery. If you feel any impairment to your ability to drive, please do not drive.

**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 appointments at Santé Cannabis.

**PREGNANCY:**

There are developmental risks to the foetus and baby with prenatal exposure to cannabis. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you should not take the cannabis treatment.

**PSYCHIATRIC EFFECTS:**

Cannabis (especially cannabis containing THC) may trigger a psychotoxic reaction in a small number of persons. If you have any history of psychotic disorders, you should not take the treatment.

# NOTES

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Patient Support available Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

**E-mail:** [support@santecannabis.ca](mailto:support@santecannabis.ca)

**Telephone:** (844) 419-4131

You can find our clinics located across Québec:  
Sherbrooke / Pointe-Claire / Québec / Montréal

**[santecannabis.ca](http://santecannabis.ca)**



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