



Patient & Family Guide

2022

# Cannabinoids for Managing Pain

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# Cannabinoids for Managing Pain

This group of medications is sometimes called ‘marijuana analgesics (painkillers)’ or ‘synthetic (artificial) cannabinoids’. The 2 most widely used cannabinoids are:

- › Nabilone
- › Sativex®

## Why have I been prescribed a cannabinoid?

Cannabinoids can help pain caused by nerves that have been damaged or no longer work well. For example, cannabinoids work well for types of pain caused by accidents, multiple sclerosis, shingles, and diabetes.

## How much of this medication do I take and how do I take it?

- Your dose will depend on the type of medication your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) chooses for you.

- The medication is usually started at a low dose. Over time, you may be told to take more. How fast your dose goes up may depend on any side effects you have. Side effects will often get better in about 1 to 2 weeks.
- Sativex® is a medication that you spray on your inner cheek or under your tongue. Nabilone comes in pill form.

## Are there any side effects?

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

### Common side effects:

- › Dizziness
- › Depression
- › Sleepiness
- › Confusion
- › Feeling high
- › Dry mouth

### Rare side effects:

- › Blurred vision
- › Dry eye
- › Memory problems
- › Hallucinations (seeing things that are not really there)
- › Flushing (sudden redness in the face, neck, and chest)

## How do I stay safe when taking this medication?

- These medications can change how you think and move your body to be able to do complex tasks or make important decisions. **Do not drive a car, operate machines (like a lawn mower, snow blower, or power tool), or do anything that you need to be alert for,** until the side effects of the medication go away.

- **Do not** take this medication with:

- › Alcohol
- › Sedatives (like sleeping pills or medication for your nerves and/or anxiety)
- › Hypnotics (sleeping pills like zopiclone [Imovane®])
- › Medications that can affect the nervous system (like medications for Parkinson's [like levodopa])
- › Medications for depression (like duloxetine)



Talk to your primary health care provider first.

## **Do not take if:**

- › You are allergic to marijuana products (like edibles or gummies).
- › You have a history of liver problems.
- › You have a history of mental illness (like psychosis, paranoia, panic, anxiety, or hallucinations).
- › You have a heart condition.
- › You have a lung condition.
- › You are pregnant or breastfeeding.

## **What if I miss a dose?**

If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next scheduled dose, skip the missed dose. **Do not take a double dose to catch up.**

**What are your questions?**

**Please ask. We are here to help you.**

## How do I store my medication?

Keep out of reach of children and pets. **A locked box is strongly recommended.**

### Sativex®

- Opened spray bottles can be kept at room temperature (15 to 30 °C) in a locked box. Store unopened spray bottles in a locked box in the fridge. **Do not freeze.** Unopened spray bottles should be taken to your pharmacy after 28 days.

### Nabilone

- Store pills at room temperature in a locked box in the package they came in. Take all unused medications to your pharmacy so they can get rid of them safely.



# Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* Pain Management Unit  
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