

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

WHAT CAREGIVERS
NEED TO KNOW



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About Medical Marijuana

What is medical marijuana?

Medical marijuana is using marijuana to treat health problems or symptoms.

Marijuana is a cannabis plant that contains:

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC):
Causes a 'high' feeling for the user
- Cannabidiol (CBD): May help reduce inflammation (swelling)

What is the Arkansas Medical Marijuana Act (AMMA)?

The AMMA allows you to buy medical marijuana from a dispensary (an office that sells medical marijuana). To qualify, you must have a doctor's certification that you have a health problem that medical marijuana can help. The doctor's certification is a form your doctor must complete before you can apply to get medical marijuana.

What health problems can marijuana treat?

Studies show that marijuana may help with:

- Chronic pain
- Nerve pain
- Muscle stiffness and spasms due to Multiple Sclerosis
- Nausea (upset stomach) and vomiting (throwing up) from chemotherapy
- Some seizures

We do not know if marijuana can improve:

- Sleep
- Appetite and weight (if you have HIV or AIDS)
- Tourette syndrome (voice and body tics)
- Anxiety symptoms

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms
- Glaucoma (eye disease)
- Cancer
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) symptoms (such as diarrhea)
- Epilepsy (seizures)
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) symptoms (such as nerve problems)
- Motor system symptoms (if you have Parkinson's disease)
- How your body fights infection

There has not been enough research yet to know if the benefits of medical marijuana outweigh the risks.

What are the possible risks of medical marijuana?

Marijuana is a natural product. But natural does not always mean something is better or safer. If you use marijuana and:

- You drive, you are more likely to crash.
- You are pregnant, your baby is more likely to be born underweight.
- You are more likely to develop schizophrenia and psychoses (mental illnesses).
- It may cause:
 - * Trouble breathing (in children)
 - * Learning, memory, and attention problems
 - * Increased bipolar disorder symptoms (extreme mood swings)
 - * Anxiety
 - * Depression
 - * Suicide attempts
 - * Addiction
 - * Pregnancy problems
 - * Trouble keeping a job
 - * Social problems (trouble getting along with others)
 - * Severity of PTSD Symptoms
 - * Glaucoma

Who should avoid marijuana?

Pregnant women: Avoid marijuana use and being exposed to marijuana smoke. Possible risks during and after pregnancy include:

- Low birth weight
- Increased risk of preterm birth
- Brain and behavioral problems in babies
- THC in breast milk might affect baby's brain development
- Attention, memory, and problem-solving problems in children

Children and teens: Do not allow children or teens to use medical marijuana unless they have a life-threatening illness.

Marijuana can affect child and teen brain development. The long-term effects of using marijuana are unknown. But we do know that marijuana use might:

- Lower their thinking, memory, and learning ability
- Affect how their brain works
- Make them more likely to become addicted to marijuana if they use it before they are 18.

Young adults: You have a higher risk of mental health problems, such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicidal thoughts
- Drug addiction

Older adults: If you take several medicines, talk to your doctor about possible medicine interactions. This means your body may react to your medicines and marijuana in different ways. Some of these medicines include:

- Heart medicine
- Blood thinners
- Anti-seizure medicines

Risks of medicine interactions in older adults include:

- Increase harmful side effects of certain medicines such as:
 - * Sleepiness
 - * Trouble with thinking or memory
 - * Trouble with balance (clumsy)
- Change how well certain medicines work

If you are a caregiver for an older adult, talk to their doctor before they use medical marijuana.

What else should I know about medical marijuana?

There are other risks to consider before you use medical marijuana. These include:

- Vaping products with THC, it may cause serious lung injuries and chronic lung disease.
- Marijuana use can cause cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome (CHS). This causes severe vomiting. This is rare and normally only happens with long-term use of marijuana every day.
- The FDA does not regulate marijuana and marijuana products, they may not be safe. Products may have:
 - * Germs, pesticides, or other harmful toxins
 - * Different amounts of THC or CBD than the label states
 - * More side effects than you expect

Has the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medical marijuana?

The FDA has not approved marijuana for medical use.

But there are some FDA-approved drugs that have THC or CBD include:

- **Epidiolex:** A CBD product to treat seizures from rare or severe forms of epilepsy.

- **Marinol and Syndros:** A man-made THC product for patients with cancer, HIV, or AIDS. It treats:
 - * Loss of appetite
 - * Vomiting
 - * Nausea
 - * Weight loss
- **Cesamet:** A man-made THC product to treat nausea and vomiting caused by cancer chemotherapy.

How to Get Medical Marijuana in Arkansas

Who can buy medical marijuana?

You can buy medical marijuana if you:

- Do not buy more than 2.5 ounces every 14 days (2 weeks)
- Are not in the U.S. military
- Have a medical marijuana ID card

How do I get an Arkansas medical marijuana ID card?

You can apply for an Arkansas medical marijuana ID card online at the Arkansas Department of Health website if you:

- Arkansas residents
- At least 21 and older
- Pay the \$50 application fee
- Pay for a criminal background check
- Have a qualifying health problem

What health problems qualify for medical marijuana under AMMA?

The following health problems qualify for medical marijuana:

Arkansas Qualifying Medical Conditions to Use Medical Marijuana

- Alzheimer's disease
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
- Arthritis (severe)
- Cachexia (extreme weight loss)
- Cancer
- Crohn's disease (intense sores)
- Epilepsy and seizures
- Fibromyalgia (muscle pain and tiredness)
- Glaucoma
- Hepatitis C
- HIV and AIDS
- Multiple Sclerosis and muscle spasms
- Nausea (severe upset stomach)
- Peripheral neuropathy (nerve pain in your limbs)
- PTSD
- Severe pain
- Tourette syndrome
- Ulcerative colitis
- ***Medical condition/ treatment approved by Arkansas Department of Health***

How long is the medical marijuana ID card valid?

The medical marijuana ID card is good for 1 year (or less, depending on how your doctor wrote the prescription).

Does the patient's doctor have to sign the medical marijuana certification?

No, the patient's doctor does not have to sign your medical marijuana certification. But they should:

- Talk to the patient about the risks and benefits of it.
- Have the patient talk with a pharmacist at a medical marijuana dispensary.

What qualifies a doctor to sign the medical marijuana certification?

The doctor who signs your medical marijuana certification must:

- Be a medical doctor (MD) or an osteopathic doctor (DO)
- Have an Arkansas medical license
- Have a current DEA number (allows doctors to write prescriptions)

No one else may complete your medical marijuana certification, including:

- An online doctor
- A physician's assistant (PA)
- A nurse practitioner (NP or APRN)

How long is my doctor's certification valid?

After you get your doctor's certification, you have 30 days to apply for your ID card.

How much does medical marijuana cost?

Medical marijuana costs about \$395 to \$560 per ounce, plus tax.

Rules for Medical Marijuana Use in Arkansas

Where can patients use medical marijuana?

The patient can only use medical marijuana at their home.

Patients **cannot** use medical marijuana:

- When they drive. This includes any type of vehicle.
- In places where using tobacco is not allowed.
- Around anyone under 14 years old.
- Around anyone who is pregnant.
- Around anyone who is not allowed to use medical marijuana.

How does the AMMA protect me as a caregiver of someone who uses medical marijuana?

As a caregiver, you must always have a medical marijuana ID card on you. You will not be arrested, prosecuted, or penalized if you have 5 ounces or less of medical marijuana unless you:

- Buy it for reasons other than treating the patient's health problem
- Get something of value in return for the product (e.g., be paid for your time spent getting the product)
- Bring it to Arkansas from another state
- Get it from somewhere other than a licensed dispensary or card holder

You cannot get paid for your time to help the patient. But you can be paid for:

- Travel costs (gas and tolls) to help the patient get the medical marijuana
- Cost of any marijuana products you buy for the patient

What other rules are part of the AMMA?

- Your workplace cannot punish you for having a medical marijuana card.
- Health insurance companies do not have to pay for medical marijuana unless required by federal law and government assistance programs.
- A person, business, or landlord can stop anyone from using or being under the influence of medical marijuana on their property.

- Store in child-safe containers
- Keep in child-resistant packages
- Make sure packages are appropriately re-sealed after use
- Consider storing in a lockbox
- Keep out of reach and sight of children and pets
- Make sure cannabis products are properly stored and disposed of in a place that is not easily visible and accessible by children or pets

Arkansas Poison Control Center
(800) 222-1222
(open 24 hours)

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Arkansas Medical Marijuana Resources & References

Arkansas Medical Marijuana Commission:
www.mmc.arkansas.gov

**Medical Marijuana Program, Arkansas
Department of Health:**
www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/medical-marijuana

**Medical Marijuana, Alcoholic Beverage
Control:** www.dfa.arkansas.gov/alcoholic-beverage-control/abc-medical-marijuana

NCCIH Clearinghouse
Toll-free in the U.S.: **1-888-644-6226**

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing
callers): **1-866-464-3615**

Website: **nccih.nih.gov**

Email: **info@nccih.nih.gov**

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