

MEDICAL MARIJUANA FOR EPILEPSY? WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW.

EDUCATIONAL SERIES:
HEALTH CONDITIONS

Updated 2024

FLORIDA LAW FORMALLY RECOGNIZES EPILEPSY AS A QUALIFYING CONDITION FOR MEDICAL MARIJUANA.

WHAT IS EPILEPSY?

- Epilepsy describes a disease of the brain that causes one or more types of seizures.
- Seizures can have different symptoms and can affect what a person sees, hears, or tastes. During a seizure, a person may not respond and may even lose consciousness.



CAN MEDICAL MARIJUANA HELP EPILEPSY?

- There is very limited evidence that supports the effectiveness of medical marijuana-containing “delta-9 THC,” which is the main compound in marijuana that is known to have psychoactive effects, on epilepsy or related seizure disorders.
 - However, cannabidiol (CBD), which is another compound found in medical marijuana, has demonstrated effectiveness in treating specific forms of epilepsy (Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, Dravet syndrome, and tuberous sclerosis complex).
 - In 2018, a plant-derived product that contains CBD but does not have any THC received FDA approval and is available as prescription medicine. The medication is named Epidiolex™.
- There is some evidence that medical marijuana products containing some THC might show similar effects as the prescription medication described above, if the product contains similar doses of CBD.
 - However, the side effects for medical marijuana might differ from prescription medications.
- Studies to date also caution that medical marijuana use may be associated with risks such as confusion, dizziness, and feeling sick (e.g., nausea).

WHAT SHOULD I ASK MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?

1. Discuss if you have any history of substance use disorder or a mental health condition such as schizophrenia.

Patients with these conditions are often excluded from clinical trials that examine the effectiveness and safety of medical marijuana, due to concerns about an increased risk of adverse events.

2. Discuss if you are taking any prescription medications to treat other conditions, such as pain, depression, cancer, or for an autoimmune disorder.

Certain compounds found in medical marijuana (e.g., cannabidiol) can interact with medications for those conditions and may require further dosing adjustments that should be guided by a physician.

3. Report and discuss any concerning effects of medical marijuana with your physician.

There are many possible interactions between medical marijuana, diseases, medications, and other substances. Therefore, regular communication with your healthcare provider can assist in identifying risks.



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5. Abu-Sawwa R, Stahling C, Epidiolex (Cannabidiol) Primer: Frequently Asked Questions for Patients and Caregivers. *J Pediatr Pharmacol Ther.* 2020 Jan-Feb;25(1):75-77. doi: 10.5863/1551-6175.25.1.75. PMID: 31897080; PMCID: PMC6938286.

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