

MEDICAL MARIJUANA FOR PAIN? WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW.

EDUCATIONAL SERIES:
HEALTH CONDITIONS

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FLORIDA LAW FORMALLY RECOGNIZES CHRONIC NONMALIGNANT PAIN AS A QUALIFYING CONDITION FOR MEDICAL MARIJUANA.

WHAT IS CHRONIC NONMALIGNANT PAIN?

Pain that is caused by or originating from many medical conditions, and that lasts 3 months or longer. “Nonmalignant” means that the pain is not associated with cancer.

CAN MEDICAL MARIJUANA HELP CHRONIC PAIN?

- Medical marijuana has been studied as a treatment to help reduce chronic non-cancer pain.
- Research findings indicate that medical marijuana, particularly in oral spray form, may provide a small to moderate relief in chronic pain when used in the short-term, meaning when used for about 1 to 6 months.
 - Evidence for pain relief is the strongest for use in nerve pain, called “neuropathy”, and it is not yet clear if medical marijuana is equally effective for relieving pain from other conditions (e.g., back pain, osteoarthritis, or fibromyalgia).
 - It is important to consider risks from medical marijuana use, which include side effects such as dizziness, sleepiness, and nausea, particularly in medical marijuana products that have a higher amount of the compound known as “THC.”

WHAT SHOULD I ASK MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?

1. Discuss if you are taking any prescription medications for pain.

Opioids, such as morphine, have increased safety risks when combined with medical marijuana.

Other medications used for chronic pain, such as gabapentin, may be unsafe to combine with medical marijuana.

2. Discuss if you have mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety.

It is common to experience depressive or anxiety symptoms with a chronic pain condition.

Research is not clear on how medical marijuana may affect mental health symptoms when present with another health condition, such as pain.

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.



The 2020 Florida Statutes. Title XXIX, Chapter 381, section 381.986. Medical use of marijuana.

Jugl S et al. A Mapping Literature Review of Medical Cannabis Clinical Outcomes and Quality of Evidence in Approved Conditions from the USA from 2016 to 2019. Med Cannabis Cannabinoids 2021.

National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: The current state of evidence and recommendations for research. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Systematic Review: Living Systematic Review on Cannabis and Other Plant-Based Treatments for Chronic Pain. Content last reviewed November 2023. Effective Health Care Program, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. <https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/products/plant-based-chronic-pain-treatment/living-review>