MEDICAL MARIJUANA FOR ALS?
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW.

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

WHAT IS ALS?

- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a neurological disorder that gets worse over time. A person with ALS may experience loss of control of their voluntary movements, such as walking, swallowing, talking, and eventually breathing.
- People with ALS may experience symptoms differently. Common early symptoms include muscle cramps, stiff muscles (called spasticity), limb weakness, speech changes, and difficulty with eating. Later symptoms include loss of muscle control (called paralysis).

CAN MEDICAL MARIJUANA HELP ALS?

- There are few high-quality studies examining the effect of medical marijuana as treatment for symptoms of ALS and the results of these studies so far have been mixed.
- Studies to date suggest that medical marijuana might help with certain symptoms that are common in ALS, including stiff muscles (spasticity) and pain relief.
- Studies to date also caution that medical marijuana use may be associated with risks such as confusion, dizziness, and feeling sick (e.g., nausea), but these risks may not be specific to people with ALS.

WHAT SHOULD I ASK MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?

1. Discuss if you have a history of falling or are having trouble with walking.

Patients who are experiencing falls and/or challenges with walking (such as problems with balance) may experience worsened risk for falls if using medical marijuana.

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 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.

1. The 2020 Florida Statutes. Title XXIX, Chapter 381, section 381.986: Medical use of marijuana.
2. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. National Institutes of Health. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). Updated July 19, 2024.
3. Suryadevara U, M Bruijnzeel D, Nuthi M, A Jagnarine D, Tandon R, W Bruijnzeel A. Pros and cons of medical cannabis use by people with chronic brain disorders. Current neuropharmacology. 2017 Aug 1;15(6):800-14.
4. Jugl S et al. A Mapping Literature Review of Medical Cannabis Clinical Outcomes and Quality of Evidence in Approved Conditions in the USA from 2016 to 2019. Med Cannabis Cannabinoids 2021.
5. 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.

Consortium for Medical Marijuana Clinical Outcomes Research

For more information, please visit the Consortium for Medical Marijuana Clinical Outcomes Research at mmjoutcomes.org.

Please note: this document is for informational purposes only, but is not medical or legal advice and should not be used to make healthcare decisions. Please consult your healthcare provider to find out what treatment options are available for you.

ABOUT THE CONSORTIUM

Established in June 2019, the Consortium for Medical Marijuana Clinical Outcomes Research conducts, shares, and supports research on the effects of medical marijuana on health conditions and symptoms in Florida.

Composed of eleven universities across the state and led by a leadership team at the University of Florida, the Consortium works to contribute to the understanding of medical marijuana use on health conditions and symptoms.

MEMBER UNIVERSITIES

CONTACT US

Questions? Email: **mmj.outcomes@cop.ufl.edu**
For more information, please visit our website at **mmjoutcomes.org**

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