

Medical Cannabis

Information for Families

What is medical cannabis.....	2
Is medical cannabis safe?.....	2
Is medical cannabis right for my child?.....	2
What types of medical conditions and symptoms Medical Cannabis can help with?.....	3
What symptoms does Canuck Place prescribe Medical Cannabis for?.....	3
What side effects might my child feel from Medical Cannabis?.....	4
Safety Measures You Should Consider Before Your Child Takes Medical Cannabis.....	5
Medications.....	5
Activity level.....	5
Your Child's Health Conditions and Health History.....	5
Canuck Place Safeguards for Prescribing Medical Cannabis.....	6
How to start Medical Cannabis?.....	6
How long does it take for medical cannabis to work? How long does it last for?.....	6
How to stop medical cannabis?.....	7
Purchasing medical cannabis for your Child.....	7
Can we travel with Medical Cannabis?.....	7
Preparing for an admission at Canuck Place.....	8

If you have any questions call a Canuck Place Nurse at 604-742-3478 and for immediate assistance call the Kid's Counter at 604-742-3475

What is Medical Cannabis?

There are many different kinds of cannabis, a type of plant known as Hemp. The cannabis plant produces a group of compounds called cannabinoids. The most studied active cannabinoids are called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

Is Medical Cannabis safe?

Canuck Place cannot ensure the safety of any cannabinoid product. Licensed producers have to follow regulatory requirements including guidelines for production, labelling, documentation and advertising of cannabinoid products, as outlined by Health Canada. These regulations differ from the strict requirements for prescription and over the counter medications that protect the public by ensuring the quality, safety and effectiveness of medications. Currently, there is not a lot of research about how safe and effective cannabinoids are in children and what the appropriate cannabinoid dosing is.

There are potential benefits in using medical cannabis despite these safety and regulatory concerns. Canuck Place doctors and nurse practitioners will prescribe medical cannabis **if** the family and child:

- Recognize the risks of using medical cannabis
- Follow the policies that Canuck Place has put into place for the use of medical cannabis. *See section: Canuck Place Safeguards for Prescribing Medical Cannabis*
- Are responsible for selecting the authorized seller (approved by Health Canada) and buying the medical cannabis product directly. *See section: Purchasing Medical Cannabis For Your Child*

Canuck Place is unable to purchase medical cannabis products and there is no current drug plan coverage. Families need to pay for medical cannabis.

Is Medical Cannabis right for my child?

While you might be hearing a lot about medical cannabis in the community, on social media and from friends and family, it is important to speak to one of your child's doctors or nurse practitioners about:

- what you have heard or read about medical cannabis
- what your hopes are for the products
- what symptom(s) you think are not being helped enough by your child's current recommended treatments and medicines
- how medical cannabis might be helpful or harmful to your child

Doctors and nurse practitioners at Canuck Place prescribe medical cannabis for symptoms in which medical cannabis may have the best impact for your child.

What types of medical conditions and symptoms Medical Cannabis can help with?

Very little research exists on medical cannabis and its use in children. Some of this research and evidence is controversial and most is taken from information from adult usage. The chart below shows some of the potential benefits and the strength of the evidence when medical cannabis is used in adults.

Potential Medical Benefits of THC and CBD	
THC	CBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anti-Nausea ▪ Anti-spasmodic (relieves spasms of muscles) ▪ Appetite stimulant (improves appetite) ▪ Sleep aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anti-spasmodic (relieves spasms of muscles) ▪ Anti-epileptic (reduces seizures) ▪ Anxiolytic (reduces anxiety) ▪ Anti-inflammatory
Substantial Evidence	Moderate Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chronic pain ▪ Nausea and vomiting related to chemotherapy ▪ Epilepsy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sleep issues ▪ Post-traumatic stress disorder
Limited Evidence	Not enough evident to support or refute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anorexia ▪ Arthritis and musculoskeletal disorders ▪ Depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cancer ▪ Irritable bowel syndrome/disease ▪ Anorexia nervosa ▪ Wasting syndrome

What symptoms does Canuck Place prescribe Medical Cannabis for?

Based on the small amount of research and evidence that supports the use of medical cannabis in children, Canuck Place doctors and nurses will work with your child's healthcare specialists to prescribe medical cannabis for the following reasons:

- Pain
- Nausea
- Appetite
- Anxiety
- Sleep
- Spasticity/Movement disorders
- Seizures

The research is not clear for the use of medical cannabis for anti-tumor effect or curative reason for any diagnosis, especially a cancer diagnosis. Canuck Place doctors and nurse practitioners will not prescribe for these uses.

What side effects might my child feel from medical cannabis?

Your child may have some of these common side effects of medical cannabis. If you notice these side effects, please call Canuck Place or your child's doctor

- Drowsiness
- Feeling or appearing sleepier than usual
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Feeling dizzy when standing up from sitting or lying down
- Headaches
- Red eyes
- Flushed skin
- Mood changes
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

If your child has the side effects below, do not give your child medical cannabis. Call Canuck Place or your child's doctor right away or take your child to emergency department:

- Seeing, hearing or thinking of something that is not present
- Feeling scared or anxious that is unusual for your child
- Agitation
- Sense of being disconnected from reality
- Memory problems
- Muscle twitching
- Change in seizure or increase in seizure frequency (if applicable)

Safety Measures You Should Consider Before Your Child Takes Medical Cannabis

Your Child's Medications:

It is important to provide Canuck Place a full list of your child's medications including prescription medications, over the counter medications, natural health products, herbal medications and supplements to decrease the risk of drug interactions. There are some medications; such as sedatives, pain medications, and certain medication for the treatment of seizures, that should not be taken together with medical cannabis and/or that require dose adjustment.

Your Child's Activity level:

Your child's alertness and coordination may be affected by the side effects that medical cannabis can cause. It may also affect your child's safety in performing activities like riding a bicycle, swimming and other sports. Care should be taken when participating in these types of activities, especially when starting medical cannabis or increasing the dose.

Teenagers should not drive for at least 8 hours after taking medical cannabis or longer if they are feeling the effects of medical cannabis. Drinking alcohol and taking medical cannabis is not recommended as it can worsen the side effects that can affect alertness, coordination and behaviour and put him/her at higher risk for harm.

Your Child's Health Conditions and Health History

Before giving your child medical cannabis, you need to let the Canuck Place doctor or nurse practitioner know of any of the following conditions:

- Kidney problems
- Liver problems
- Blood pressure problems
- Heart problems including faster than usual heart rate and fainting
- Blood vessels problems or stroke
- Seizures
- Personal /family history of mood disorders, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, psychosis, alcohol or drug use

Canuck Place Safeguards for Prescribing Medical Cannabis

Along with the safety measures addressed above, before Canuck Place doctors and nurse practitioners will prescribe medical cannabis, the Canuck Place Team will:

- perform a symptom assessment;
- make a plan to work together with you and your family on an ongoing basis to assess, re-assess and monitor the effects of medical cannabis and your child's health;
- request written consent from a parent or legal guardian for all children under the age of 19. For youth, the team will also engage in conversations to determine his/her understanding of the risks and benefits of the use of medical cannabis.

Canuck Place doctors and nurse practitioners will only prescribe medical cannabis in capsule or oil forms, which are taken by mouth (orally) or through a feeding tube. They will not prescribe edibles, inhaled cannabis or topical cannabis.

How to start medical cannabis?

Our doctors and nurse practitioners will suggest a product and prescribe a specific dose of medical cannabis. They will monitor for the effect it has on your child's symptoms and for any intolerance or side effects. At this time, there is very little research to help guide the most appropriate dosing of medical cannabis in children. For these reasons, Canuck Place doctors and nurse practitioners:

- will prescribe a low starting dose that is specific to your child and monitor how his/her symptoms respond to the medical cannabis and for side effects
- will work together with you and your child to slowly adjust the dosage as tolerated until the symptoms are well managed
- may need to stop your child's medical cannabis therapy if the risks and side effects of using medical cannabis outweigh the benefit

How long does it take for medical cannabis to work? How long does it last for?

When medical cannabis is taken by mouth or through a feeding tube, your child may start to feel its effect within 30-90 minutes. Its effect may last from 4 to 8 hours. The maximum effect of medical cannabis is about 2 to 3 hours after it has been taken.

How to stop medical cannabis?

Once medical cannabis is started, your child should not suddenly stop taking it as this may result in serious side effects. If for any reason medical cannabis needs to be stopped, a Canuck Place doctor or nurse practitioner needs to be contacted. The Canuck Place team will develop a plan with you to safely wean the dose of medical cannabis for your child.

Purchasing medical cannabis for your Child

Canuck Place is not a licensed producer or seller of medical cannabis. In addition, unlike prescriptions and over the counter medications, Canuck Place is not able to purchase medical cannabis products. At this time, there is no drug plan coverage, which means families are required to pay for medical cannabis. We recognize this can be a burden for some families.

You need to decide where you will purchase the medical cannabis product.

- Select a licensed producer from the Health Canada website, which has links to a list of sellers that are approved: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/getting-cannabis-from-licensed-producer/accessing-from-licensed-producer.html>.
- Register with the licensed producer:
 - Complete a registration form specific to that licensed producer. These forms are found on the website of the licensed producer or by contacting them.
 - Complete a form that allows a child to have cannabis as a minor. This form is also found on the website of licensed producers. If you have questions about the forms, it is best to call the company directly.
 - Provide your original “medical document”. This Health Canada form is called “Medical Document Supporting the Use of Cannabis for Medical Purposes.”. This form must be completed by a doctor or nurse practitioner. It is printed from a link on the Health Canada website.
- When there are more **government approved and licensed** stores open there may be more options to purchase in person.

Can we travel with Medical Cannabis?

You may travel **within Canada**, provided that you keep your documentation with you at all times.

If you have plans to travel **outside of Canada**, please talk to the Canuck Place team. We can give you extra documents that you will need for travel outside of Canada. We cannot, however, promise that the cannabis products will not be taken away by customs officers of the country you are travelling to.

Preparing for an admission at Canuck Place

If your child has a medical cannabis product (including CBD and THC oils and “medical marijuana”) as part of their care, and your child is coming to stay at the hospice, we require the following:

- A copy of the “*Medical Document*” that one of your child’s doctors completed in order to get access to medical cannabis in Canada. This is usually a form from the company where you buy the medical cannabis.
- A copy of the authorization/registration that you signed allowing your child to access medical cannabis in Canada (required for all children less than 19 years). This form is usually completed when you registered with a company to be allowed to purchase medical cannabis. If you submitted this form online, you can print a new form from the supplier website to provide a copy to CPCH.
- The name of the medical cannabis product, strength and dose (as part of the medication review process).
- If your child receives their medical cannabis as an oil or capsule and you would like a Canuck Place nurse to administer it to your child, you must bring in a sealed bottle, clearly labeled with the product name, and strength or concentration. It must be purchased from a Canadian licensed producer or government authorized seller. Canuck Place does not assume any responsibility for the integrity of the product and we are not able to directly order or purchase the medical cannabis product.
- If your child (teen) uses dried leaf cannabis by a vapourizer, he/she must be able to take it without assistance from a nurse. Please bring the product in the original container, and the container must include the product name, and strength or concentration. It must be purchased from a Canadian licensed producer or government authorized seller. Canuck Place does not assume any responsibility for the integrity of the product we are not able to directly order or purchase the medical cannabis product.

If your child uses or receives a medical cannabis product, and you are not able to meet these requirements, please still let us know it is a part of their care! We will work with you to see if or how it could be incorporated into their care at Canuck Place.