

PHC

Medicinal Cannabis in the UK

Here's everything you need to know about medical cannabis in the UK:

Medicinal Cannabis is a natural product, not the man-made product created to simulate the cannabis experience.

From 1 November 2018, Doctors in England, Wales and Scotland have been able to prescribe medical cannabis products to patients provided that they meet safety standards.

What is medicinal cannabis?

Medical cannabis prescribed by specialist doctors is a natural product and will contain compounds of cannabis, including CBD and low levels of THC. "CBD oil" and "cannabis oil" are two cannabis-based products patients can be prescribed. The two terms are often used interchangeably, although cannabis oil tends to include THC, the psychoactive substance found in cannabis.



What is CBD?

CBD, also known as cannabidoil, is one of 104 chemical components found in marijuana plant. The substance can be extracted and mixed with a carrier oil, often hemp seed or coconut, to create CBD oil. Unlike THC, the chemical compound of CBD is not psychoactive – it won't make you feel 'high'. CBD sold in the UK must be EU licensed to be legally sold.



What conditions are treated with medicinal cannabis or CBD?

CBD is currently present in two licensed products in the UK - Sativex, has been licensed for a decade and is approved to treat shakes and spasms associated with multiple sclerosis and Epidiolex, used to treat two rare forms of childhood epilepsy, this product is awaiting European licence. (There are additional products that contain man-made cannabis like products, but these are not natural medicinal cannabis).



Can my GP prescribe me medicinal cannabis?

No, the new legislation says medical cannabis can only be prescribed by specialist doctors, and the specialist clinician wishing to prescribe CBD oil will have to prove exceptional clinical circumstances. They would have to demonstrate that there is no other lawful medicinal product that would meet the specific needs of the patient and they need to apply for approval from a Governmental expert panel in each case, the panel will consider the merits of each individual case before granting the licence.

Furthermore, your local pharmacy is not able to dispense the medicinal cannabis, this must be done by a specialist pharmacist.



Is it legal to buy CBD online or obtain it without a prescription?

Since the law has recognised CBD as medicine, it is legal to use in the UK. Many health stores such as Holland & Barrett have started selling CBD products as food supplements, however, they cannot claim any medicinal properties for these products, and these products do not contain significant levels of THC.

Currently, the law states that CBD products can have a maximum THC content of 0.2 per cent. CBD products with a higher THC content are subject to tighter regulation because THC is illegal in the UK. Therefore any CBD oil with a THC content higher than 0.2 per cent, obtained without prescription, is illegal and its use is prohibited.



Is possession of cannabis still illegal?

Yes - cannabis continues to be a class B drug and possession will still carry an unlimited fine and up to five years in prison. Mr Javid made this clear when he announced the UK was to legalise medical cannabis. The 2018 regulations continue to prohibit smoking of cannabis, including cannabis-based products for medicinal use in humans.

What should I do if I use medicinal cannabis and I am subject to workplace drug screening?

You should not buy CBD on the internet. You cannot ever be sure of the THC content, nor can you be sure that the product is even licensed for human consumption.

Using a defence of ignorance with regard to the THC content of a cannabidoil product will not protect you from prosecution under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, nor in an appeal against a positive drugs screen in the workplace.

For those choosing to take CBD as a food supplement, you should continue to declare any medications that you have taken, both prescribed and across the counter medicines, along with the CBD product, to the collection officer at the time of the collection.

All medications and food products will be confirmed by the Toxicologist on laboratory confirmation. If necessary, PHC's medical review officer, working in conjunction with the toxicology team, will obtain specific written confirmation of your exact prescription from your Specialist doctor.

For more information about Medicinal Cannabis, please visit:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-44534861>

<https://www.netdoctor.co.uk/medicines/a23099460/cbd-oil-benefits-and-risks/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/medical-cannabis/>