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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Frequently Asked Questions About Medical Marijuana

This information answers frequently asked questions about medical marijuana.

## What is medical marijuana?

Marijuana, also known as cannabis, is a plant that's used to treat some symptoms related to cancer. Medical marijuana comes in many forms, including vape pens, pills, lozenges, oils, and powder. It isn't a prescription medication. A licensed doctor or advanced practice provider (APP) must certify you if you want to buy medical marijuana from a registered dispensing facility (a place where medical marijuana is sold).

**Don't use medical marijuana for anything other than managing your cancer-related symptoms.**

## Who can take medical marijuana?

Medical marijuana is for people who have cancer and serious cancer-related symptoms such as chronic pain, serious nausea (feeling like you might throw up), and losing too much weight.

Your healthcare provider will review your condition, along with your personal and family history, to help decide if medical marijuana is right for you. They will only recommend medical marijuana if other treatments to control your cancer symptoms, or other conditions, haven't worked.

A licensed MSK doctor or APP can certify you for medical marijuana if you're being treated at an MSK location in the same state you're living in.

For example, if you live in New Jersey (NJ) but get cancer treatment in New York (NY), your NY MSK doctor can't certify you to buy medical marijuana in NJ. You must be certified by a doctor in NJ and buy medical marijuana in NJ. For more information, talk with your healthcare provider.

**Your medical marijuana shouldn't be shared with anyone else.**

## How can I get medical marijuana?

If you're interested in buying medical marijuana, you will need to follow these steps:

1. Your healthcare provider must approve and certify you to buy medical marijuana. This means that your healthcare provider will talk with you about medical marijuana, and if approved, give you a special form with certification information. You can use this form to register as a patient with the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH).
2. Once certified, you will need to register and apply online as a patient at [my.ny.gov](https://my.ny.gov).
  - You will need to have an NY.gov account to log in. If you don't have an NY.gov account, click the "Don't have an account" button to make one.
  - You can also register a caregiver on the site, if you have one, so they can buy medical marijuana for you, if needed.
3. Once you've registered and your application is complete, you will need to wait for approval. Some people may be approved right away and others may need to wait a few days.
  - Once your application is approved, you will be able to access a temporary registry identification (ID) card. You can use your temporary ID card to buy medical marijuana from a state-approved dispensing facility until you get your official registry ID card in the mail. This can take 7 to 10 business days.
  - For more information on registering for an ID card, visit [www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical\\_marijuana/patients](https://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical_marijuana/patients).

3. You can buy medical marijuana from registered dispensing facilities in New York State.
  - A list of these facilities can be found here:  
[www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical\\_marijuana/application/selected\\_applicants.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical_marijuana/application/selected_applicants.htm).
  - **You must bring your registry ID card with you and a photo ID, such as a driver's license, to buy medical marijuana.**

## How much does medical marijuana cost?

The cost of medical marijuana depends on many things. It can be different depending on how much you get, what form you get, and the prices at the dispensing facility. Medical marijuana isn't usually covered by insurance, so you will need to pay for it (out-of-pocket). You can call the dispensing facility for more information about costs.

There may be a cost to register as a patient with the NYS DOH. Check the following website for updated information on registration fees:

[www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical\\_marijuana/patients](http://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical_marijuana/patients).

## What are the side effects of medical marijuana?

The side effects of medical marijuana are different for everyone and depend on the form you're taking. Some common side effects may include:

- Drowsiness (feeling sleepy)
- Restlessness (feeling like you can't relax or get comfortable)
- Anxiety (strong feelings of worry or fear)
- Paranoia (intense thoughts or feelings that someone might try to harm you)
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there)
- Feeling hungry

- Short-term memory loss
- Euphoria (feeling very happy or excited)
- Trouble focusing
- Changes in your blood pressure
- Faster heart rate
- Confusion
- Nausea
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Flushing (when your skin becomes red or warm)
- Depression (strong feelings of sadness)
- Insomnia (trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early)

If you're worried about any of these side effects, talk with your healthcare provider.

## Other Resources

### **NYS Department of Health**

[www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical\\_marijuana/patients](http://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/medical_marijuana/patients)

This website gives more information for patients and caregivers about New York State's medical marijuana program, including frequently asked questions, how to register, and where you can buy it.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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