Tetrahydrocannabinol and Cannabidiol

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it’s used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: Canada
Sativex

Warning

- This drug may be habit-forming with long-term use.

- This drug may cause dizziness, memory problems, mood changes, change in how you act, strong urges that are hard to control, or a change in thinking clearly and with logic. People have also passed out when taking this drug. Some of these effects may get better if the dose is lowered or how often you take this drug is changed by your doctor. Call your doctor right away if you have any of these effects, mood changes, or thoughts of killing yourself.

- Do not use more than what your doctor told you to use. Do not use more often or longer than what you were told. Doing any of these things may raise the chance of very bad side effects.

- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for alertness while you take this drug. Talk with your doctor.

- This drug may cause a fast heartbeat or changes in blood pressure like low blood pressure. If you have heart disease, a heartbeat that is not normal, high blood pressure, or heart failure (weak heart), talk with your doctor before using this drug. This drug may not be right for you.

- Talk with your doctor if you have seizures or have ever had seizures.

- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol or use other drugs and...
natural products that slow your actions.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat pain or muscle stiffness in patients with MS (multiple sclerosis).
- It is used to treat pain in patients with cancer.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to tetrahydrocannabinol, cannabidiol, or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you or a family member have ever had schizophrenia or any other mental or mood problem.
- If the patient is a child. Do not give this drug to a child.
- If you are a man and plan on starting a family while you are being treated.
- If you are able to get pregnant and are not using birth control.
- If you are pregnant or may be pregnant. Do not take this drug if you are pregnant.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.
What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- If you have a drug or drinking problem, talk with your doctor.
- Use care to prevent injury and avoid falls or crashes.
- Do not smoke or use other forms of cannabis (marijuana) while taking this drug. Talk with your doctor.
- This drug may catch on fire. Do not use near an open flame or while smoking.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- If you are a man and have sex with a female who could get pregnant, protect her from pregnancy during treatment and for 3 months after your last dose.
- If you are a man with a sex partner who is pregnant or plans on getting pregnant at any time while you are being treated or within 3 months after your last dose, talk with your doctor.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- Use birth control to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug and for 3 months after the last dose.
- If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within 3 months after your last dose, call your doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms
that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Very bad irritation where this drug is used.
- A fast heartbeat.
- Seizures.
- Trouble passing urine.
- Not able to focus.
- Change in balance.
- Slurred speech.
- Blurred eyesight.
- Very bad headache.
- Not hungry.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Irritation where this drug is used.
- Dizziness.
- Diarrhea.
- Dry mouth.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Constipation.
- More hungry.
- Change in taste.
- Change in color of mouth and teeth.
- Cough.
- Throat irritation.
- Belly pain.
- Anxiety.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

**How is this drug best taken?**

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Shake well before use.
- Prime pump before first use by spraying it 2 to 3 times into a tissue until you see a fine mist.
- Spray into mouth below the tongue or on the inside of the cheeks.
- Space each spray by at least 15 minutes.
- Put the cap back on after you are done using your dose.
- Move the site in your mouth with each spray.
- Do not spray into nose.
- Do not spray the back of the throat.
- Do not spray onto sore or swollen areas in the mouth.
- Keep the spray away from the eyes. If this drug gets in the eyes, rinse right away with water. If eye irritation or redness lasts, call the doctor.

**What do I do if I miss a dose?**
If you use this drug on a regular basis, use a missed dose as soon as you think about it.

If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.

Do not use 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Many times this drug is taken on an as needed basis. Do not take more often than told by the doctor.

**How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

- Store unopened vials in a refrigerator. Do not freeze.
- Store upright with the cap on.
- Store opened vials at room temperature. Throw away any part not used after 42 days.
- Protect from heat and sunlight.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

**General drug facts**

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Keep a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.
- Talk with the doctor before starting any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or
other health care provider.

- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

**Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

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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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