

## Medical cannabis

Access to safe, effective treatment is an important part of an injured worker's recovery. We will consider the approval of medical cannabis for the medically necessary treatment of work-related injuries in some specific cases. Our medical cannabis policy reflects medical evidence, advice and knowledge about the benefits and risks of medical cannabis use, as well as the law that governs use of cannabis for medical treatment in Canada.

### What is included in this policy?

- Pharmaceutical cannabinoids which are prescription drugs approved by Health Canada to treat specific medical conditions. These include Nabilone (Cesamet™ and generics) and Nabiximols (Sativex™), and
- Medical cannabis which is a broader term that includes multiple forms of cannabis (e.g., dried, topical, oil, edibles, etc.) authorized for use as medical therapeutic treatment when sourced from official Health Canada approved providers. Due to the health risks associated with smoking, we do not support the use of any smoked cannabis products.

### Coverage for medical cannabis

We may consider coverage for medical cannabis if it is authorized by a medical doctor for the treatment of any of the following condition(s) resulting from a work-related injury or disease or its treatment:

- Chronic neuropathic pain resulting from an injury to the nervous system.
- Spasticity resulting from an injury to the central nervous system or spinal cord.
- Nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite associated with cancer chemotherapy.
- Opioid/narcotic harm reduction if MEQ is over 90 mg/day.
- Palliative care

All of the following criteria must be met before medical cannabis is approved for a work-related injury or disease:

**1. It is authorized for one of the conditions listed above.**

**2. It is authorized by the treating health professional.**

The physician who authorizes the worker's medical cannabis must also manage the ongoing care of their injury and their response to medical cannabis treatment.

**3. All conventional treatments are exhausted.**

You must exhaust standard therapies before initial entitlement to medical cannabis will be considered. You will need to trial pharmaceutical cannabinoids with the worker before we will consider funding cannabis for medical use in all cases, except for palliative or end-of-life care or where medically contraindicated.

**4. It is authorized following clinical assessment.**

You must perform an in-person clinical assessment before we consider initial entitlement to medical cannabis. You will need to complete ongoing reassessments every three months to support the worker's ongoing entitlement to medical cannabis.

**5. The benefits outweigh the risks.**

Medical cannabis may be covered when the benefits of the treatment outweigh the risks to the worker's health. Workers with certain risk factors such as age and medical history may need medical confirmation that medical cannabis is the only remaining course of action and the risk of not attempting a trial of medical cannabis is greater than the potential harm.

**6. Medical cannabis is not interfering with their recovery and safe return to work.**

Workers must obtain pre-approval from WCB before purchasing cannabis to treat their injury.

### Safe dose and type

You must authorize medical cannabis at the lowest safe and effective dose in terms of both the daily quantity prescribed and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) percentage (a daily quantity of 3g and a maximum THC level of 9%).

### Suspension or termination of coverage

We may suspend or end coverage for medical cannabis when:

- There is insufficient improvement in pain and/or function (e.g., 30% reduction in pain symptoms).
- Its use appears to be imperiling recovery or return to work.
- Significant side effects have developed.
- There is evidence of misuse.

### Additional resources

- [Cannabis medical patient booklet](#) – RxFiles, University of Saskatchewan
- [Clearing the Smoke on Cannabis \(May 2022\)](#) – Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction
- WCB physicians' guide to authorizing cannabinoids for medical use

