

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS

## Personal and Designated Production of Cannabis for Medical Purposes

As a health care practitioner, you may be asked about authorizing the use of cannabis for medical purposes. To support your decision-making, here are some things you should know, including information related to the fact that some individuals are abusing the program and illegally selling their excess supply.

## Medical Access Program

Health Canada's medical access program was first established in 2001 to provide Canadians with reasonable access to cannabis for medical purposes. Under the current medical access program, individuals can access cannabis in two ways:

- Register with Health Canada to grow cannabis for their own medical purposes (personal production) or to designate a person to produce it on their behalf (designated production).
- Register with a licence holder with a sale for medical purposes licence issued by Health Canada.

Individuals can also choose to purchase cannabis products directly from provincial or territorial authorized retailers without a medical document.

## Authorizing Cannabis for Medical Purposes

To obtain cannabis under the medical access program, an individual must have a medical document signed by a health care practitioner. The medical document has to list an authorized daily amount of dried cannabis which is expressed in grams per day.

Health care practitioners are only authorized to provide the medical document for individuals under their professional treatment and if cannabis is required for treatment of the individual's condition. Providing an authorization for cannabis for medical purposes requires an assessment of the patient's condition for which they are receiving treatment.

A **sample medical document** is available: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/licensed-producers/sample-medical-document-marihuana-medical-purposes-regulations.html>



## Daily Authorized Amount (dried cannabis)

If you determine cannabis is the most suitable treatment for your patient, you must consider the appropriate amount to authorize. When it comes to the daily amount, keep in mind:

- Available clinical evidence suggests between 1-3 grams of dried cannabis /day is appropriate for most patients. Health Canada has published **information regarding dosing of cannabis for medical purposes**.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/information-medical-practitioners/cannabis-medical-purposes-regulations-daily-amount-fact-sheet-dosage.html>

Health care practitioners are also advised to follow provincial or territorial guidelines.

- If a patient intends to use cannabis products other than dried cannabis, an equivalency must be specified on the medical document. Refer to **equivalent amounts for cannabis products** for more information.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/people-registered-designated-produce-cannabis-medical-purposes.html>

Some factors to consider are:

- Is the authorized daily amount of cannabis supported by credible clinical evidence and / or published treatment guidelines?
- Is the authorized daily amount of cannabis reasonable, taking into account the diagnosis, previous treatments, as well as potency, strain, route of administration, cultivation methods, and potential for product loss from processing activities?

## Health Canada May Have Follow Up Questions

In some cases where the authorized daily amount is excessive, Health Canada may request additional information from you to substantiate the daily amount authorized for your patient.

You should be prepared to provide supporting information such as peer-reviewed data, references or resources to support your clinical decision. If you don't respond to the request for more information or cannot provide information to substantiate the authorized amount, the patient's application may be refused.

## Authorizations For Large Amounts of Cannabis Can Have Consequences

The amount of cannabis authorized for a person who produces their own medical cannabis, or has a designated producer, dictates the amount of cannabis that can be grown. To give you an idea, using the **plant calculator** found on Health Canada's website, an authorization of 25 grams of dried cannabis per day, means your patient could be growing approximately 125 cannabis plants in their home. The number of plants authorized is based on a formula in the plant calculator that considers factors including the average yield of a plant under certain growing conditions, such as indoor or outdoor growing, and the number of growth cycles expected in a year. The formula accounts for plant loss related to growing and storage conditions. It is not necessary to account for potential loss when determining the daily quantity of cannabis for your patient.

**Plant calculator:** <https://health.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drug-health-products/buying-using-drug-health-products-safely/cannabis-medical-purposes/accessing-cannabis-medical-purposes/production-cannabis-medical-purposes/calculator.html>

Authorizing large daily amounts of dried cannabis results in higher quantities of cannabis plants being grown. This could cause health and safety risks, property damage, and can also result in odours and other nuisance complaints.

Authorizing large daily amounts where they are not necessarily required for treatment purposes create significant risks to public safety as individuals may sell or divert the excess cannabis to an illicit market or activity for profit. Selling cannabis produced under personal or designated production is illegal.

## Addressing Risk of Abuse of the Program

Health Canada is concerned that personal and designated production is sometimes abused. There is evidence to suggest that some personal and designated production sites are used to support criminal activity. In some instances, law enforcement has laid charges against personal and designated producers who were selling their cannabis.

Health Canada is prepared to act on any evidence that individuals are not respecting the terms and conditions of their registrations or the regulatory requirements. Health Canada will take action to correct any potential non-compliance with the Cannabis Regulations.

Health Canada proactively and regularly shares data with the provincial and territorial regulatory bodies governing physicians and nurses, including names of Health Care Practitioners who authorize large amounts of cannabis. Health Canada will also co-operate with regulatory bodies

in investigations of wrongdoing. In some cases where there are clear criminal activities taking place, Health Canada may also refer the matter to law enforcement for further investigation.

Should you have any questions related to the information above, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Medical Access and Specialized Authorizations at: [cannabis@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:cannabis@hc-sc.gc.ca)

## More Information

A comprehensive monograph on the pharmacology, potential therapeutic uses and risks of using cannabis for medical purposes

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/information-medical-practitioners/information-health-care-professionals-cannabis-cannabinoids.html>

Guidance on personal production of cannabis for medical purposes, including factors Health Canada may consider when deciding to refuse or revoke a registration for personal or designated production

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/guidance-personal-production-cannabis-medical-purposes.html>

For patients: A summary of essential information about the use of cannabis for medical purposes

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/licensed-producers/consumer-information-cannabis.html>

Cannabis odours and odour control

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/industry-licensees-applicants/cannabis-odours-control.html>

Cannabis Reporting

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/recalls-adverse-reactions-reporting.html>