



If you're considering medical cannabis as a treatment option for yourself or for a loved one, you probably have more questions than answers. The sheer volume of information available about cannabis can feel overwhelming.

This resource document, the first of four, explains the active ingredients in medical cannabis and how they work. If you have questions that are not answered here, have a look at the other three resource documents.

It is important to speak with your physician about medical cannabis therapy. We hope that these resource documents will help provide you some valuable information to better prepare yourself for that discussion.

### **Medical Cannabis**

Medical cannabis, also called medical marijuana, refers to the flowering head or "bud" of the female cannabis plant.

Medical cannabis shouldn't be seen as a cure for any disease. Instead, it is a medicine used to relieve the symptoms caused by a variety of different diseases and conditions. Sometimes conventional medications simply are not enough, and in those instances cannabis may have a role to play.

Only the producers licensed by Health Canada can legally supply medical cannabis to patients. Each Licensed Producer must comply with extensive quality, safety and security requirements.

### **Why Cannabis Works – The endocannabinoid system**

Every person has an endocannabinoid system, just like a nervous system and digestive system. The endocannabinoid system is involved in many processes in your body, including appetite, pain-sensation, mood and memory.

Your endocannabinoid system naturally produces chemicals similar to those found in cannabis. These chemicals work to pass messages between the brain and different parts of the body through your neurons and receptors. Some medical ailments affect the proper functioning of the endocannabinoid system, which can lead to many of the symptoms that patients experience as part of their condition.

The cannabinoids introduced with medical cannabis (which are called phytocannabinoids) help to treat those symptoms by supplementing the endocannabinoids normally produced in your body, and subsidizing your endocannabinoid system as a whole.

This illustration demonstrates how the cannabinoids from cannabis subsidize the standard messages sent between the receptors in your neurons. The dots represent the locations in the body where cannabinoids act on the endocannabinoid system.

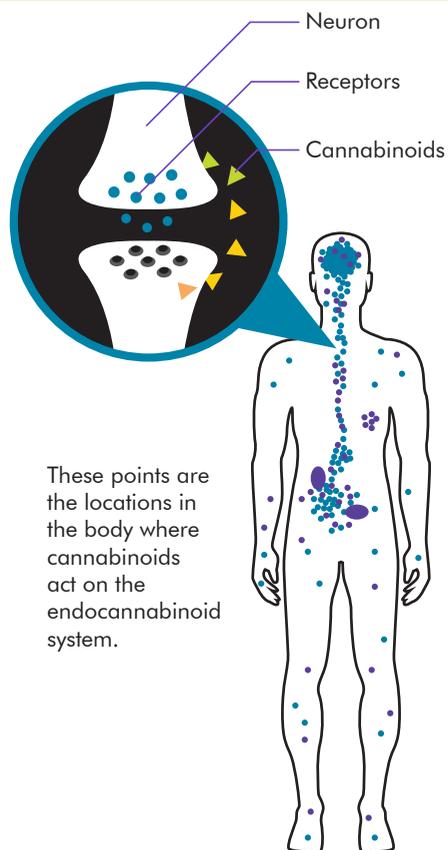
### The active Ingredients: THC and CBD

Cannabinoids are the active chemical ingredients produced by the cannabis plant. More than 100 different cannabinoids have been identified, but research has focused on only two of them so far: Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

**THC** is the substance known to cause the psychoactive effects or the “high” felt from cannabis. Scientific studies, as well as anecdotal evidence, suggest that THC is effective in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), functions as an appetite stimulant for HIV/AIDS patients, reduces nausea and vomiting from cancer treatment, and helps patients with insomnia, inflammation and pain.

**CBD** lacks nearly any psychoactive effect and is showing promise with epilepsy, including children with a severe form called Dravet’s Syndrome. CBD has also been used successfully by patients with genetic brain disorders, anxiety, ischemia, inflammation, pain and nausea.

CBD also helps to make the “high” caused by THC more tolerable and can have an impact reducing the likelihood patients will experience paranoia or anxiety caused by THC.



**Trichomes** that grow on the outside of marijuana flowers contain the active ingredients in cannabis, including THC and CBD.



For more information, please contact  
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