

Medical Cannabis - Patient Information

1. What is medical cannabis?

"Medical cannabis" is a broad term for any sort of cannabis-based medicine used to relieve symptoms. Another term for this is cannabis based products for medicinal use (CBPMs).

Some cannabis-based products can now be legally prescribed by specialist doctors as medicinal cannabis. These are only likely to benefit a very small number of patients.

It remains illegal to possess cannabis for recreational use or for medical use without a prescription.

2. Is medical cannabis available on the NHS in North Central London?

A priority for the NHS in North Central London (NCL) is to ensure that use of medical cannabis is safe, effective, and equitable for patients in the region. In line with prescribing for all medicines, the potential for harm must be weighed up against the potential for benefit.

To determine this, an evaluation of the safety and effectiveness of medical cannabis products is being undertaken. This will be completed by the NCL Joint Formulary Committee, who make decisions on medicines for NHS hospitals, GPs and other services in the North Central London region.

Until this evaluation has taken place, prescriptions for medical cannabis will not be available across NHS organisations in North Central London.

3. What about products available to buy without a prescription?

Some cannabis-based products are available to buy over the internet without a prescription. It's likely most of these products – even those called "cannabidiol (CBD) oils" – will be illegal to possess or supply.

There's a good chance they will be of low quality, containing ingredients that are either unsafe to use, or the quantities in the product are unknown.

Health stores sell certain types of "pure CBD". However, there's no guarantee these products will be of good quality either. And they tend to only contain very small amounts of CBD, so it's not clear what effect they would have.

It is therefore advised not to buy medical cannabis on the internet or without a prescription.

4. Can I get a prescription for medical cannabis from my hospital consultant?

Although hospital consultants on a specialist register are legally allowed to write a prescription for a medical cannabis, this is subject to several restrictions. The NCL Joint Formulary Committee are supporting prescribers across North Central London with information on the safety and effectiveness of medical cannabis products, and when these are appropriate to be prescribed.

Until this evaluation is complete, hospital consultants will not be able to prescribe or supply medical cannabis for patients.

5. Can I get a prescription for medical cannabis from my GP?

Medical cannabis can only be prescribed by a specialist hospital doctor. GPs cannot prescribe medical cannabis. The health community in North Central London ask that patients do not request GP referrals for medical cannabis until the evaluation of medical cannabis is complete.

6. I already use medical cannabis – can I get more from my GP or consultant?

If you already use medical cannabis, you should continue to obtain this through your regular route of supply until this position statement is updated. If you are admitted to hospital, please ensure you bring supplies of your medical cannabis and any documentation that came with the product with you, as the hospital will not be able to supply more during your admission.

7. When will this position be updated?

The North Central London position will be updated after the NCL Joint Formulary Committee has met to discuss the evaluation of medical cannabis and an implementation plan. The target date for this is the end of January 2019. This statement will be updated thereafter to inform you of the decision that has been reached.