

# Thinking about trying medical marijuana?



## Back to “Medical marijuana—hype or hope?”

Learn more about [medical marijuana and MS](#).

If, after careful consultation with a neurologist, you want to try medical marijuana or a medication related to marijuana to address your MS symptoms, begin with the following questions:

### Do I want to try FDA-approved Marinol first?

Marinol does not involve any special state requirements like a “medical marijuana card,” just a regular prescription. Marinol is also available as the generic form, dronabinol. However, the FDA does not recognize Marinol’s use for treating symptoms of MS, so the prescription will be considered an off-label use. This means you will have to check first to see if your health insurance will cover the cost in the same way it covers other medications.

### If I want to try other medical marijuana products, what is legal in my state?

For basic information, visit [medicalmarijuana.procon.org](http://medicalmarijuana.procon.org) and search for “legal marijuana states.” If medical marijuana is allowed in your state, go to your state’s website to find the state agency that oversees its use.

Many of these agencies provide question-and-answer pages and other information on their websites that will help you understand what is legal. If not, phone them directly.

You will need to find out whether medical marijuana is approved for people with MS, for example, or whether you need another qualifying condition like pain or spasticity. If you don't qualify, you will want to know whether or not you can submit a request to your state's health department for an exception.

### **How do I get access to medical marijuana?**

Most states where marijuana is legal have a registry program. Typically, you will need written documentation from your physician that says you meet your state's requirements for medical marijuana use. (Note that this is different from a prescription.) You then provide this information to the state agency that oversees medical marijuana and pay a fee, and then you may receive a "medical marijuana card."

In some states, the card can prove you have the right to grow and possess a certain amount of marijuana if you are ever questioned.

In other states, the card enables you to purchase products at a state-licensed medical marijuana dispensary. How these products are regulated varies by each state, including, for example, how much information the product labels have and whether products have been independently tested for strength and purity.

Your health insurance will probably not cover the cost, since these are not medical drugs as defined by health insurance policies.

### **What kinds of medical marijuana will I find?**

This will depend on your state. You may only have the legal right to possess a certain amount of marijuana, or your marijuana card may allow you or another person certified by your state as your medical marijuana caregiver to grow a certain number of plants. You may be able to buy marijuana to smoke or vaporize from a state-licensed medical marijuana dispensary. Other products may include extracts of marijuana with varying ratios of THC and CBD, and foods and drinks that contain these extracts. The American Academy of Neurology stresses that these are not the same as the oral cannabis extract (OCE) pill that was used in clinical trials; therefore, the clinical results you get may not be the same.

### **Will using medical marijuana affect me legally in other ways?**

Driving while under the influence of marijuana is never legal, even if you are licensed to possess medical marijuana in your state. In addition, the laws around drug testing in the workplace and its effect on hiring and firing decisions are complex and evolving, and you may need more information about these and other marijuana-related concerns from a lawyer licensed to practice in your state who has experience with these specialized issues.