



What does medical cannabis really treat?

With medicinal marijuana becoming more and more accessible, many people are asking: What does medical marijuana really treat? Is it truly medicinal? If it is medicine, why hasn't my doctor suggested it as treatment option? These are reasonable and responsible questions that deserve answers.

In fact, in Canada, many physicians are unwilling to support the use of cannabis as a treatment leaving some patients unable to secure the medical authorization needed to purchase or produce cannabis.

According to [The 2016 Government of Canada Cannabis Task Report](#), the lack of support for cannabis from doctors is due to a lack of scientific cannabis research: "While doctors recognize that some patients may obtain relief from their symptoms through the use of cannabis, [physicians say] it is difficult to meet their obligations to provide patient care and to protect patient safety when they do not have the evidence, training or guidance to do so."

According to the Canadian government's cannabis [task force report](#) doctors struggle with the prescribing medical marijuana due to the lack of research. They say they are placed difficult position of knowing that cannabis may help a patient but also being responsible for a patient without fully understanding how this medicine will treat a patient, as they would with another prescription drug.

Despite the United States government's classically conservative stance on cannabis, that government also recognized this void in the knowledge for doctors. The United States Government commissioned a group of experts to conduct a comprehensive review of scientific literature. Their report, [The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids: The Current State of Evidence and Recommendations for Research](#), reviewed 10,700 papers.

The Health Effects of Cannabis: Result System Explained

The results of this review were divided into five categories: conclusive evidence, substantial evidence, moderate evidence, limited evidence and no or insufficient evidence to support the association.

Three conditions cannabis definitely treats

The NAS grouped the top two categories together, and was prepared to say they found there was **conclusive or substantial evidence** that three conditions are treated or they are 95 per cent sure is treated by medical cannabis:

- chronic pain in adults
- chemotherapy nausea and vomiting
- multiple sclerosis spasticity

One condition cannabis most likely treats

The NAS found **moderate evidence** that medical cannabis is useful for improving sleep. In particular, it is useful for improving sleep in patients with:

- obstructive sleep apnea syndrome
- fibromyalgia
- chronic pain
- multiple sclerosis

Four conditions cannabis probably treats

The NAS found **limited evidence** that medical cannabis could treat:

- appetite and decreasing weight loss in people with HIV/AIDS
- Tourette syndrome
- anxiety in people with social anxiety disorders
- post-traumatic stress disorder

With prohibition lifting, so too will the limitations on scientific research. Doctors and patients can look forward to better and more conclusive research on medical marijuana and the conditions it can treat.