

# How to Get a Medical Cannabis Prescription in the UK

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A step-by-step patient guide covering eligibility, the consultation process, costs, and what to expect — from first enquiry to first prescription.

**For UK patients** · Based on current NICE guidance and GMC prescribing standards · Updated May 2026

**FREE PATIENT GUIDE**

## INTRODUCTION

## What This Guide Covers

Medical cannabis has been legal in the UK since November 2018. Despite this, many patients are unaware they may already qualify for a prescription — or how to access one. This guide explains exactly what the process involves.

**The key fact most patients don't know:** You do not need an NHS referral. Any GMC-registered specialist can prescribe cannabis-based medicines privately. Most consultations happen online, within days of applying.

### The Legal Situation in the UK

Medical cannabis was rescheduled to Schedule 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations in November 2018, following a review by the Home Secretary. This means GMC-registered specialist doctors can legally prescribe cannabis-based medicinal products (CBMPs) for any condition where there is clinical evidence to support it.

The NHS prescribes in only a very small number of cases — primarily Epidyolex for specific childhood epilepsies and Sativex for MS-related spasticity. For the vast majority of patients, the route is private prescribing through a licensed specialist clinic.

## MEDICAL CANNABIS — LEGAL

- Schedule 2 since Nov 2018
- Requires a GMC specialist prescription
- Dispensed by licensed UK pharmacies
- Available for a wide range of conditions
- Over 80,000 UK patients currently prescribed

## RECREATIONAL CANNABIS — ILLEGAL

- Class B under the Misuse of Drugs Act
- No legal recreational market in the UK
- No equivalent of the German partial legalisation
- CBD food supplements: legal (under 1mg THC)
- Not the same as prescribed cannabis medicine

## CHAPTER 1

## Do You Qualify?

There is no official approved-indication list. A GMC-registered specialist can prescribe for any condition where the clinical evidence supports it and conventional treatments have been inadequate.

### The Core Eligibility Rule

Across all conditions, UK specialists apply a consistent standard: you must have tried at least **two conventional treatments** that either failed to provide adequate relief or caused unacceptable side effects. This documents treatment resistance and justifies moving to cannabis-based medicine.

**What "treatment-resistant" means in practice:** If you have been prescribed two or more medications, physiotherapy programmes, or psychological therapies for your condition and they have not worked well enough — you likely meet the basic threshold. Your GP records and prescription history are your evidence.

### Commonly Prescribed Conditions

PAIN	MENTAL HEALTH & NEUROLOGICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic pain (most common)</li> <li>• Neuropathic pain / sciatica</li> <li>• Chronic back pain</li> <li>• Fibromyalgia</li> <li>• Rheumatoid arthritis</li> <li>• Endometriosis</li> <li>• Migraines / cluster headaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PTSD</li> <li>• Anxiety disorders</li> <li>• ADHD (treatment-resistant)</li> <li>• Epilepsy (treatment-resistant)</li> <li>• Multiple sclerosis</li> <li>• Parkinson's disease</li> <li>• Tourette syndrome</li> </ul>
SLEEP	OTHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic insomnia (with comorbidity)</li> <li>• Sleep disorders linked to chronic conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cancer-related symptoms</li> <li>• IBS (treatment-resistant)</li> <li>• Cachexia and wasting</li> <li>• Menopause (comorbid symptoms)</li> <li>• Crohn's disease</li> </ul>

**Important:** Acute conditions, conditions without a documented treatment history, and conditions where first-line therapies have not yet been tried are unlikely to qualify. A specialist will always review your full medical history before prescribing.

## CHAPTER 2

## The Prescription Process

From initial enquiry to your first prescription typically takes 1-4 weeks. Most clinics operate entirely online. Here is exactly what happens at each stage.

### 1 Initial Application

Complete an online eligibility form with your clinic of choice. You will be asked about your condition, how long you have had it, and what treatments you have tried. Most clinics give an instant indication of eligibility at this stage.

### 2 Medical Records Request

The clinic will ask you to provide (or consent to them requesting) your GP records. This confirms your diagnosis and treatment history. Having a summary letter from your GP speeds the process significantly, but it is not mandatory at most clinics.

### 3 Specialist Consultation

A video consultation with a GMC-registered specialist doctor — typically lasting 30-60 minutes. The doctor reviews your history, asks about your symptoms, current medications, and treatment goals. They assess whether cannabis-based medicine is clinically appropriate for you.

### 4 Prescription Issued

If the specialist is satisfied, they issue a prescription for a cannabis-based medicinal product. This is typically an oil (CBD:THC formulation), dried flower for vaporisation, or a combination. The prescription specifies the product, dose, and route of administration.

### 5 Pharmacy Dispensing

Your prescription is sent to a licensed UK pharmacy — either one associated with the clinic or one of your choice. The pharmacy dispenses and typically delivers directly to your home, usually within 2-5 working days of the prescription being issued.

### 6 Follow-Up & Titration

Most clinics schedule a follow-up at 4-8 weeks to review your response and adjust dosing if needed. Ongoing prescriptions are reviewed regularly — typically every 3 months. Your specialist monitors for effectiveness and any side effects throughout treatment.

## CHAPTER 3

## What to Prepare Before Your Consultation

A well-prepared patient gets a better consultation. Here is what to gather before you book — and what to expect the specialist to ask.

### Documents to Have Ready

- GP summary letter or printed medical records confirming your diagnosis
- List of all medications you have tried, with approximate dates and why you stopped
- List of current medications (including supplements and OTC)
- Any relevant hospital letters, consultant reports, or specialist referral letters
- Details of any psychological therapies or physiotherapy programmes completed
- Your current symptom picture — how often, how severe, how it affects daily life
- Any previous use of cannabis (medical or otherwise) and its effects

### Questions the Specialist Will Ask

#### Typical consultation questions:

How long have you had this condition? · What treatments have you tried and what happened? · What are your main symptoms today? · How does your condition affect your daily life, sleep, and work? · Do you smoke or vape? · Do you drive? · Are you currently taking any medications? · Have you ever used cannabis before?

### Helpful but Not Always Required

A GP referral letter is not required by most private cannabis clinics. However, it significantly speeds up the medical records review and can strengthen your case. If your GP is supportive, a brief letter confirming your diagnosis and treatment history is worth requesting.

### Preparing for Common Follow-Up Questions

Specialists often ask why you are interested in cannabis-based medicine specifically. A clear, clinically grounded answer — rather than a general interest in cannabis — is more persuasive. Focus on your specific symptoms, what has not worked, and what outcome you are hoping for.

## CHAPTER 4

## Costs: What to Expect

Medical cannabis is almost exclusively private in the UK. Understanding the cost structure upfront avoids surprises.

Cost Item	Typical Range	Notes
Initial consultation	£50 - £199	One-off. Some clinics include this in the first month's package.
Monthly medication	£80 - £400	Depends on product type, dose, and whether flower or oil.
Follow-up appointments	£50 - £100	Every 1-3 months. Some clinics include unlimited follow-ups.
Prescription fee	£15 - £30	Per prescription. Some clinics bundle into monthly cost.
Annual total (estimate)	£1,200 - £5,000	Wide range depending on clinic, condition, and dose.

### What Affects the Cost Most

#### HIGHER COST

- High-dose THC flower products
- Clinics with specialist psychiatrists
- Complex conditions requiring closer monitoring
- Combination oil + flower regimens

#### LOWER COST

- CBD-dominant oils (lower THC)
- Clinics with subscription pricing
- Stable, well-controlled patients
- Less frequent follow-up needed

**Does insurance cover it?** Most UK health insurers do not cover medical cannabis as it is unlicensed. Some specialist health insurance products are beginning to offer limited coverage. Always check your policy wording directly with your insurer.

### NHS Prescribing: The Reality

The NHS prescribes cannabis-based medicines in very limited circumstances: Epidyolex (CBD) for Dravet syndrome and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome in children, and Sativex (nabiximols) for MS-related spasticity. For all other conditions, NHS prescribing remains exceptionally rare in practice despite being theoretically permissible since 2018.

## CHAPTER 5

## Products and Choosing a Clinic

Not all cannabis-based medicines are the same — and not all clinics specialise in the same conditions. Here is what you need to know before choosing.

### Types of Prescribed Cannabis Medicine

#### OILS (MOST COMMON)

- CBD-dominant: lower psychoactive effect
- Balanced THC:CBD: moderate effect
- THC-dominant: stronger, for severe pain/sleep
- Taken sublingually or in food/drink
- Dose precision easier than flower

#### DRIED FLOWER

- Vaporised (not smoked) via medical vaporiser
- Faster onset than oils (minutes vs 1-2 hrs)
- Often prescribed for breakthrough pain
- Various strains (indica/sativa/hybrid)
- Requires a medical-grade vaporiser

### How to Choose a Clinic

All legitimate UK cannabis clinics employ GMC-registered specialist doctors. The key differences are in specialist focus, pricing structure, and patient experience. Consider the following:

- Does the clinic have specialists in your specific condition area?
- Are follow-up appointments included or charged separately?
- What is the typical wait time from application to consultation?
- Does the clinic have a UK-registered pharmacy partner for dispensing?
- What is the clinic's process if the initial prescription does not work for you?

**Clinics to research:** Releaf, Mamedica, Lyphe Clinic, Curaleaf Clinic, Sapphire Medical, Zerenia, Alternaleaf, TMCC, London Cannabis Clinic. Detailed comparisons, patient reviews, and pricing information are available at [cannacheck.co.uk/clinics/](https://cannacheck.co.uk/clinics/)

### Important: Driving and Cannabis

If your prescription contains THC, you must not drive until you and your specialist are satisfied that your driving is not impaired. UK drug-driving law applies to prescribed medicines. Discuss driving explicitly with your prescribing specialist before starting treatment.

# More Patient Guides at

[cannacheck.co.uk](https://cannacheck.co.uk)

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[cannacheck.co.uk](https://cannacheck.co.uk) is an independent UK patient information resource. We cover qualifying conditions, clinic comparisons, costs, UK cannabis law, and everything else patients need to navigate the medical cannabis system.

[CONDITIONS](https://cannacheck.co.uk/conditions/)

[CLINICS](https://cannacheck.co.uk/clinics/)

[HOW TO GET A PRESCRIPTION](https://cannacheck.co.uk/how-to-get-medical-cannabis/)

[UK CANNABIS LAW](https://cannacheck.co.uk/legal/)

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This guide is for informational purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice. Always consult a qualified healthcare professional before making decisions about your treatment. Information is based on publicly available UK clinical guidance and prescribing standards current as of May 2026.

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