



Nurses Association
OF NEW BRUNSWICK

Practice Guideline for Nurse Practitioners Authorizing Medical Cannabis



MANDATE

We regulate registered nurses and nurse practitioners in New Brunswick to ensure the provision of safe, competent, and ethical care in the interest of the public.

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Nurse practitioners (NPs) in New Brunswick have the authority to order medical cannabis. NPs enable clients to access medical cannabis by completing a medical order or an authorizing document¹. NPs are expected to comply with legislation and evidence-informed clinical guidelines of practice, when prescribing any drug, including the authorization of medical cannabis. NPs are expected to:

- act in the best interests of their clients;
- provide therapeutic interventions only to individuals under their professional care;
- practise within the limits of their knowledge, skills and judgment (competence);
- authorize cannabis only when it is required or shown in evidence to be a therapy for the condition for which the client is receiving treatment;
- collaborate effectively and respectfully with clients, physicians and other healthcare providers;
- avoid any conflict of interest, which includes making personal financial gain at the risk of client wellbeing; and
- practise in accordance with employer policies and the Nurses Association of New Brunswick regulatory standards, including the *Canadian Nurses Association's Code of Ethics*.

Effectiveness and Risks

As with any therapeutic intervention, including drugs, NPs should only authorize medical cannabis when clinically indicated. NPs must assess whether medical cannabis is the most appropriate treatment and as part of this process, consider the available evidence in support of medical cannabis as well as the evidence of risks or contra-indications to the drug. There are a number of resources NPs can consult for more information (please see the resource links listed in this document).

¹ **Medical order or authorizing document** refers to an ordering mechanism for medical cannabis. Clients obtain a medical document completed by an authorized healthcare practitioner in order to access medical cannabis. The medical document should contain information that would normally be found on a prescription: the client's name and date of birth; the prescriber's name, work address and registration/license number; the type of cannabis, including a daily quantity of cannabis to be used by the client; and the duration of use.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/licensed-producers/sample-medical-document-marihuana-medical-purposes-regulations.html>



Ordering Medical Cannabis

Before ordering any therapeutic intervention, NPs are expected to obtain informed consent in accordance with legislation, regulatory standards and employer policies. Consent may include a signed treatment agreement. NPs who order medical cannabis should advise clients about the risks and benefits of cannabis, including its therapeutic effects; side effects; contraindications with other drugs; safe storage; and the importance of obtaining the medical cannabis from an authorized supplier.

Unlike conventional drugs, cannabis is available in a variety of strains and formulations that vary significantly in their potency and chemical composition. Hence, sensitivities to the psychoactive and therapeutic effects of cannabis may vary, depending on the strain/formulation. NPs are expected to consult established clinical guidelines and to collaborate with a physician, as required, when authorizing medical cannabis.

In situations where medical cannabis fails to meet the therapeutic goals or the risks outweigh the benefits to the client, the NP should stop authorizing the drug.

Charging Fees

The document used to authorize medical cannabis is considered to be similar to a prescription. Prescriptions and activities related to prescriptions, are insured services. Accordingly, NPs should not charge clients or licensed cannabis producers for completing the authorizing document, or for any activities associated with completing the authorizing document, including, but not limited to: assessing the client; reviewing his/her chart; educating or informing the client about the risks or benefits of cannabis; or confirming the validity of an order in accordance with the legislation.



Resources: Ordering Medical Cannabis

Canadian Nurses Association: Cannabis

<https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/policy-advocacy/cannabis>

College of Family Physicians of Canada: Cannabis Resources for Family Physicians

<https://www.cfpc.ca/ProjectAssets/Templates/Category.aspx?id=12164&terms=cannabis>

CNPS: Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes: What Every Nurse Should Know

<https://www.cnps.ca/index.php?page=502>

Government of Canada Resources

Cannabis Act

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-24.5/>

Cannabis Education Resources

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis/education-resources.html>

Cannabis Impairment

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis/impairment.html>

Cannabis Regulations

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2018-144/>

Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-38.8/>

Information for Health Care Practitioners - Medical Use of Cannabis

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/information-medical-practitioners.html>

Nurses Association of New Brunswick Standards

<http://www.nanb.nb.ca/practice/standards>





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