



Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017

Get the Facts: The Difference Between Recreational Cannabis and Medical Cannabis

The Basics

Cannabis (also called marijuana, weed and pot) is a drug that comes from a plant, and consists of dried flowers and leaves that are greenish or brownish. There are different ways to use cannabis, which include, but are not limited to:

- Smoking as a cigarette (sometimes called a ‘joint’ or ‘blunt’), or through a bong or pipe;
- Vaping (through an e-cigarette or vaporizer);
- Mixed in with food and/or drink; and
- Heated and ingested as oil, wax, or in a form called shatter, which is made from cannabis resin or hash.

Cannabis contains THC¹, a chemical that causes psychoactive effects — known as feeling ‘high’ — which can affect someone’s mood and behaviour. Cannabis also contains CBD². Unlike THC, CBD does not produce a ‘high’. There is some evidence that CBD may block or lower some of the effects of THC on the brain. This may occur when the amount of CBD in the cannabis is the same or higher than the amount of THC.

CBD is also being studied for its possible therapeutic uses.³ Cannabis used for medical purposes may be different than recreational cannabis and will generally have a higher CBD content and lower THC content.

	Recreational Cannabis	Medical Cannabis
What is recreational cannabis? What is medical cannabis?	Recreational cannabis is for personal use. On October 17, 2018, recreational cannabis consumption will become legal for adults in Canada, subject to certain restrictions.	Medical cannabis is authorized by a health care professional for use in treating and managing illness. Access to medical cannabis is regulated by the federal government.
What is the main difference if you use them?	Recreational cannabis generally has a higher THC content.	Medical cannabis generally has a higher CBD content and lower THC content, and is used for medical or therapeutic purposes.
Where can you obtain it?	Cannabis and seeds for private growing can be purchased online at the Ontario Cannabis Store (as of October 17, 2018). Cannabis will be available through licensed private retailers as of April 1, 2019.	Can only be obtained through a federally licensed retailer, upon authorization by a healthcare professional. Can be grown by authorized users, or their official designate, who are licensed by Health Canada.

¹ Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol

² Cannabidiol

³ Health Canada. About Cannabis. Last updated 2018 Aug 13. Retrieved from:

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

Where can recreational and medical cannabis be smoked or vaped?

- Private residences (not including private residences that are also workplaces)
- Many outdoor public places, such as sidewalks and parks
- Designated guest rooms in hotels, motels and inns
- Controlled areas in long-term care homes, certain retirement homes, provincially-funded supportive housing, psychiatric facilities, veterans' facilities and residential hospices
- Residential boats or vehicles fitted with permanent sleeping accommodations and cooking facilities when parked or anchored and they meet other criteria

Where is the smoking and vaping of recreational and medical cannabis use not permitted?

- Enclosed public places, enclosed workplaces and other sheltered areas with a roof and more than two walls (such as bus shelters)
- Vehicles and boats being driven or under someone's care or control
- Indoor common areas in condominiums, apartment buildings and university/college residences
- Schools and school grounds, outdoor grounds of a community recreational facility and public areas within 20 metres of perimeter of those grounds
- Child care centres, and places where an early years program or services is provided
- Places where home child care is provided, regardless of whether children are present
- Children's playgrounds and public areas within 20 metres of playgrounds
- Publicly-owned sporting areas (not including golf courses), adjacent spectator areas and public areas within 20 metres of these areas
- Restaurant and bar patios and public areas within nine metres of a patio
- Nine metres from the entrance or exit of a public hospital, private hospital, psychiatric facility, long-term care home and independent health facility
- Outdoor ground of public hospitals, private hospitals, psychiatric facilities and specified Ontario government buildings.
- Reserved seating areas of outdoor sports or entertainment venues

Edibles

The federal government has announced that the commercial manufacture of edible products containing cannabis will be authorized within one year of the federal *Cannabis Act*. As such, edible cannabis products will not be commercially available immediately upon legalization in October 2017.

Individuals can make their own edible products at home intended for personal consumption (for persons 19 years of age or older).