

Cannabidiol (CBD) containing medicines and foodstuffs.

There has been an increase in popularity of the use of CBD containing products by the general population. This has generated several queries and questions as to the safety and legality when taken by users of the service.

CBD is one of the main compounds derived from the cannabis plant. It is non-psychoactive, and can be used together with the psychoactive compound, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) for medical use as part of a prescribed medicinal cannabis regime. Medicinal cannabis typically has higher concentrations of CBD than those available on the high street, they may also contain THC in varying concentrations.

The potential risks of THC cannabis products are unclear, but include psychosis and dependency, although this can be minimised if monitored by a specialist. Generally, the more THC the product contains, the greater these risks are.

Licensed medical cannabis (Epidyolex® and Sativex®) are prescribed through the NHS for certain individuals such as those with severe epilepsies. Unlicensed medical cannabis preparations such as oils and dried flowers are manufactured to pharmaceutical grade quality and prescribed **privately but not on the NHS** for conditions* where there is clinical evidence to support use. Medicinal cannabis can only be prescribed by specialists on the GMC register within their area of expertise. The prescribing is monitored by local controlled drugs accountable officers.

CBD products available on the high street are classified as novel foods, they are not manufactured to pharmaceutical-grade quality. They have not been evaluated in human studies and therefore no approved medical claims which can be made about over-the-counter CBD products. It is illegal for over-the-counter CBD product to contain more than trace amounts of THC.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is advising people who are pregnant, breastfeeding or taking any medication not to consume non-prescription CBD products. Healthy adults are advised by the FSA to keep their daily intake at, or below, 70mg (about 28 drops of 5% CBD) unless otherwise advised by a healthcare professional.

Somnolence (drowsiness), decreased appetite, diarrhoea and raised serum aminotransferases (liver enzymes) were side effects significantly associated with the use of an oral purified CBD solution.

Actions:

- Check with service users whether they are taking prescribed or over the counter CBD containing preparations – particularly where symptoms could be explained by this.
- Drug interactions can be checked using the BNF (cannabidiol), a common interaction includes a synergistic effect when combined with other CNS depressants.
- Refer service users back to the original prescriber if they ask you to prescribe cannabis products as these cannot be prescribed on the NHS

For further information contact your locality pharmacist

References:

[NHS England » Cannabis-based products for medicinal use: Frequently asked questions Overview | Cannabis-based medicinal products | Guidance | NICE Cannabis Guidance unlicensed CBPMs updated 2020.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
[Cannabidiol oil – potential adverse effects – SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)

[Cannabis-QA-considerations-final-v.3.pdf \(sps.nhs.uk\)](#)

[UK Medical Cannabis Registry | Prescribing Medical Cannabis](#)

*Conditions where there is some clinical evidence for efficacy include ADHD, anxiety, Tourette's, OCD etc.