



STEP 1: ACKNOWLEDGE CANNABIS* USE

Ask older patients if they are currently taking cannabis for any reason

Including this question in routine patient care (e.g. medication review/ lifestyle counselling) can help to normalize discussion around cannabis with older adults

A

Yes	No, but would consider it	No
<p>Continue by asking about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for use • Perceived effectiveness • Adverse effects • Duration • Frequency • Amount of product and type/mode • Access 	<p>This opens the conversation to discuss cannabis in greater detail with your patient</p>	<p>Document that your older patient is not taking cannabis and continue with your assessment</p>

STEP 2: REVIEW

Evaluate whether older patients are appropriate candidates for medical cannabis:

- Consider existing health issues
- Review cannabis indications and evidence
- Discuss therapeutic options and possible role of cannabis

Assessing Appropriateness of Medical Cannabis for Older Adults

Using **A R C**¹ Framework

(Acknowledge, Review, Collaborate)

C

Review History and Potential Risk to Assess Appropriateness^{2,3}

- **Falls:** any in last 12 months, use of mobility aids
- **Cognitive function:** pre-existing diagnosis (dementia, Mild Cognitive Impairment), changes in past year
- **Mental health:** e.g. schizophrenia, mood disorders, PTSD
- **Cardiovascular:** e.g. uncontrolled hypertension, arrhythmias
- **Medications:** sedative-hypnotics, psychoactive medications, other drug interactions
- **Past or active substance use disorder:** alcohol, prescription medication, illicit drugs, cannabis
- **Employment/leisure:** activities requiring attention, focus, problem solving, and physical abilities
- **Driving:** review driving habits

Physical Exam

- Blood pressure and heart rate: ensure stable, postural vitals
- Transfers and gait: Timed Up and Go Test, Short Physical Performance Battery Test
- Cognitive/mental health assessment: objective cognitive testing, mood screens if indicated
- Vision and hearing: objective testing if indicated

Contraindications⁴

- Known hypersensitivity to cannabis or cannabinoids
- Severe cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease
- Severe renal or liver disease
- History of psychiatric disorders including:
 - Schizophrenia or other psychoses (with high THC content)

STEP 3: COLLABORATE

Discuss the appropriateness of continuing or trialling cannabis with your older adult patient

When your patient is a good candidate for cannabis

- Discuss whether your patient wants to pursue a treatment plan that includes cannabis
- If yes, develop **Treatment Plan Checklist** (see example)

Treatment Plan Checklist

- ✓ Establish goals of cannabis use
- ✓ Discuss potential adverse effects, medication interactions and safety considerations
- ✓ Write down the form(s), dosage(s), route(s), and when to take cannabis
- ✓ Sign a patient agreement (if needed)
- ✓ Organize a follow-up plan
- ✓ Explain how to obtain the product

When your patient indicates they will use cannabis despite concerns or risks that have been flagged

- Acknowledge that your patient has the right to make their own decisions
- Review the evidence and how potential risks appear to outweigh possible benefits
- Inform your patient that cannabis will be added to their medical record
- Continue an open dialogue and establish a follow-up plan so the risks/ concerns identified can be monitored

When your patient is not a good candidate for cannabis

- Review how potential risks appear to outweigh possible benefits
- Collaborate with your patient on other potential treatments/interventions that could be explored
- Discuss revisiting cannabis as a therapeutic option in the future if circumstances change

1. J. Choi Cannabis and Older Adults Project March 2022

2. Minerbi A, Häuser W, Fitzcharles M-A. Medical Cannabis for Older Patients. *Drugs & Aging*. 2018;36(1):39-51. doi:10.1007/s40266-018-0616-5

3. Canada H. For health care professionals: Cannabis and cannabinoids – Canada.ca. Canada.ca. Published 2018. [For health care professionals: Cannabis and cannabinoids – Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-care-professionals/cannabis-and-cannabinoids-canada-ca)

4. Welcome to the Interprofessional Comprehensive Geriatric Toolkit. Interprofessional Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment Toolkit. Accessed November 22, 2021. <https://cgatoolkit.ca/>