



## CANNABIS FAQs

### What is the difference between medical cannabis and recreational cannabis?

Medical cannabis is generally used to alleviate symptoms of a disease or disorder. Medical cannabis is authorized by a prescriber who provides a medical document allowing individuals to obtain the cannabis from a licensed producer or apply to Health Canada to grow their own. For further information on medical cannabis please see the [Health Canada website](#).

Recreational cannabis is generally used for its euphoric effects. On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 recreational cannabis will become legal. For further information on recreational cannabis please see [Cannabis in Canada: Get the facts](#).

### If a nurse practitioner, registered nurse or licensed practical nurse is authorized to use medical cannabis, can they still work?

NPs, RNs and LPNs are always accountable to meet their Standards of Practice, regardless of their medical condition and treatment plan. Nursing professionals may be able to continue to work while being treated with medical cannabis. Medical cannabis would be no different than another prescribed medication, for example an opioid for chronic pain, which could impact their ability to provide safe, competent, compassionate and ethical nursing care while meeting their Standards of Practice.

Every nursing professional is accountable to assess their fitness to practice. Fitness to practice means the nursing professional has the necessary physical, mental and emotional health to provide care that meets their Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. If the nursing professional decides that the use of medical cannabis is preventing them from making appropriate care decisions or meeting their standards of practice, the nursing professional should refrain from practice and discuss the situation with their immediate manager. They may also want to consider discussing the situation with the health care provider who authorized the use of medical cannabis.

There may be circumstances when the nursing professional is not able to self-assess and may require an assessment by others who can determine if the nursing professional is able to provide safe, compassionate, competent and ethical care. Resources which may be useful in a situation like this may be:

- Primary care provider
- Manager/Supervisor
- Association Practice Consultants
- Employee assistance program
- Employer policy
- [Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses](#)
- [Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada](#)
- [Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses](#)
- [Code of Ethics for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada](#).

## **What should I do if my colleague takes a break on nights and when they return I hear them say they consumed cannabis brownies? How do I know if they are safe to look after clients?**

This situation could be a professional practice issue which all nursing professionals are obligated to address according to their Standards of Practice. The first step would be to verify if this information is factual and accurate. If you suspect a colleague is impaired, ensuring client safety is the first priority. In order for nursing professionals to respond appropriately when they suspect impairment in a co-worker, they need to be able to recognize possible signs and symptoms.

If the nursing professional is impaired and may pose a threat to client safety, immediately take steps to ensure client safety. You should notify your supervisor, manager or employer right away and document your actions. Based on this consultation, you or the supervisor, manager or employer may be required to remove the nursing professional from the practice environment and client care. Remember, your ultimate responsibility is to ensure the safety of the clients.

For more information on incapacity and/or problematic substance use see the following resources:

- [Duty of Care \(ANBLPN\)](#)
- [Guidelines for the Recognition and Management of Problematic Substance Use in the Nursing Profession \(NANB\)](#)
- [Impairment and Cannabis in the Workplace – Government of Canada](#)

## **One of my nursing colleagues posted pictures on their public social media account of them partying (drinking and smoking cannabis). Should I say anything to them? Does this pose a risk to client safety?**

Self-regulated professionals face a higher level of scrutiny in their public life than the average person and any activity they engage in on social media can be viewed and judged by the world. Nursing professionals are required to demonstrate behaviours that uphold the public trust in the profession and are responsible and accountable for their actions and decisions. Any breach of trust, even inadvertent, has potential to damage the nurse-client relationship and could pose a risk to client safety and the general trustworthiness of the profession of nursing. Inappropriate use of social media could be considered a breach of the Standards of Practice.

Nursing professionals should maintain the same level of professionalism when using social media as they would when communicating face-to-face. You should discuss your concerns about your colleague's social media presence in a private place away from clients and others. It will be important for you to discuss the potential risks not only to client care, but to their professional reputation. You should refer to your organizational social media policy and your code of conduct as tools in this discussion.

- [Professional use of Social Media and Information Technology ANBLPN NANB](#)

## **The organization I work at does not have a policy related to cannabis in the workplace. What is my responsibility?**

Nursing professionals benefit from a clear process/policy related to cannabis use in the workplace. Lack of a clear process and policies can make it difficult for nursing professionals to meet their Standards of Practice. Nursing professionals should advocate for clear process and policies related to cannabis and engage with their employer in the development of these policies.

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