

Index No. Practice Direction 16.21
Subject: Cannabis
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Practice Direction - Cannabis

Expected Outcome

Clients will receive evidence-based information from Registered Dietitians on cannabis as it relates to the client's nutritional needs/concerns. Clients requesting medical cannabis must be referred to an authorized prescriber i.e. physician or nurse practitioner.

Practice Direction

Although cannabis became legal in Canada as of October 17, 2018, Phytocannabinoids remain a [schedule 1 drug](#).¹ The [Cannabis Act](#) creates a strict legal framework for controlling the production, distribution, sale and possession of cannabis across Canada.² The [Cannabis Regulations](#) provide for public access to Cannabis as well as access to medical cannabis through a physician or nurse practitioner.³ The aim of the [Cannabis Regulations](#) is to treat cannabis like other psychoactive drugs used for medical purposes. Patients must consult with a physician (or an authorized nurse practitioner) and obtain a signed "medical document".⁴ Cannabis may interact with other medications and/or affect a patient's existing medical condition⁵.

Although cannabinoids have been promoted for an array of medical conditions, research into the therapeutic effects of cannabis is still evolving. However, harms of cannabinoids have been found to be consistent within research trials.⁶

Provided the dietitian has the knowledge, skills and judgement to do so, it is within the scope of practice for a dietitian to provide general information on cannabis i.e. impact of cannabis on appetite, however, patients/clients should be referred to their physician/nurse practitioner for information on dosing and medical authorization. Dietitians do not have the authority to prescribe/authorize medical cannabis.

Clients Under the Influence

If a client is under the influence of cannabis, similar to a client under the influence of alcohol or other substances, dietitians must use their professional judgement to determine if the client has the capacity to consent and if the appointment can proceed.

If the dietitian determines that the appointment should not proceed, the following should be discussed with the client and documented.

1. The reasons for not proceeding with the appointment.
2. Rescheduling the appointment
3. The dietitian's inability to provide care should the client arrive to subsequent appointments, while impaired.

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4. Safety risks to client and/or others i.e. Did the client drive to the appointment? How are they getting home? Should the client's emergency contact or emergency services be notified? Organizations may have policies and procedures in place for this type of situation.^{7,8}

References

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4. Canadian Medical Protective Association. Medical Cannabis: Considerations for Canadian Doctors. Retrieved Feb 20, 2020 at: <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2014/medical-marijuana-new-regulations-new-college-guidance-for-canadian-doctors>.
5. Canadian Medical Protective Association. Clearing the Haze: How the legalization of recreational marijuana may affect your medical practice. Retrieved Feb 20, 2020 at: <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2018/clearing-the-haze-how-the-legalization-of-recreational-marijuana-may-affect-your-medical-practice>.
6. Canadian Family Physician. Simplified guideline for prescribing medical cannabinoids in family practice. February 2018, 64 (2) 111-120. Retrieved February 20, 2020 at: <https://www.cfp.ca/content/64/2/111>.
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