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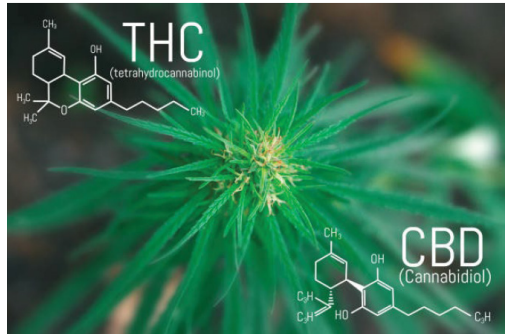


**Medical cannabis and
over-the-counter CBD
are not the same**

It has been over four years since the UK government introduced a law change to enable cannabis to be legally prescribed for medicinal use.

Medical Cannabis

The majority of cannabis-based medicinal products (CBMPs) are unlicensed medicines that have to be prescribed as 'specials'. This means they can only be prescribed by GMC registered specialist doctors once licensed options have either been exhausted or deemed unsuitable.



As medicinal products, CBMPs are regulated by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA); the organisation responsible for ensuring the safety, quality, and effectiveness of medicines in the UK.



CBMPs are complex as the two main compounds in cannabis – CBD and THC – can be combined in many different ratios and concentrations, along with other compounds from the whole plant. This allows treatment to be tailored to a patient's needs. CBD and THC act on different receptors within the human body, producing separate effects. While there is some evidence supporting the use of CBD alone for conditions such as anxiety¹, incorporating THC appears to be more beneficial in others, including chronic pain.²

Medical Cannabis Clinics

Clinics have been set up in the UK for managing symptoms of medical conditions which may benefit from CBMPs. These include chronic pain and psychiatric disorders such as insomnia, depression, and anxiety. Patients can either self-refer to these clinics or be referred by their doctor. In these clinics, doctors with experience in prescribing CBMPs can assess whether a trial is suitable, and if so, help patients find the right dose of CBD and/or THC needed to manage the symptoms of their condition.

Refer to the back cover for a list of UK medical cannabis clinics.

Over-the counter CBD

In parallel, over-the-counter (OTC) CBD products have gained popularity in recent years and can be purchased without a prescription in pharmacies or online.



However, these are not medicinal products as they are regulated by the Food Standards Agency (FSA).



In order to be exempt from MHRA control, OTC CBD products must contain no more than 0.3% THC. A study published by the US National Institute of Health, however, found that products are often mislabelled, with 69% not containing the amount of CBD claimed, and THC being detected in 21% of samples. The study also revealed that some of the products failed laboratory testing for heavy metals, yeast, and mould.^{3,4}



References

¹Bergamaschi.M, Queiroz.R, Chagas.M et al. Cannabidiol reduces the anxiety induced by simulated public speaking in treatment-naïve social phobia patients (2011). *Neuropsychopharmacol* 36(6):1219–26

²de Donk.T, Niesters.M, Kowal.M et al. An experimental, randomised study on the analgesic effects of pharmaceutical-grade cannabis in chronic pain patients with fibromyalgia (2018). *Pain* 160(4):860–869

³Evans.D. Medical fraud, mislabelling, contamination: all common in CBD products (2020). *Mo Med* 117(5):394–399

⁴Freedman.D & Patel.A Inadequate regulation contributes to mislabelled online cannabidiol products (2018). *Pediatr Neuro Briefs* 32:3

Summary table

Over-the-counter CBD	Medical cannabis
Does not require a prescription	Requires a prescription
Can be purchased in pharmacies or online	Must be prescribed by a GMC registered specialist doctor
Contains CBD only (< 0.3% THC maximum)	Contains CBD and/or THC in different doses and ratios, allowing treatment to be tailored to a patient's needs
Sold as food supplements and therefore regulated by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Not considered a medicinal product.	A medicinal product and therefore regulated by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
Product quality, safety, and effectiveness is not assured by the MHRA	MHRA-assured product quality, safety, and effectiveness
No consultation with a specialist doctor regarding suitability of product or appropriate dosage	Specialist medical cannabis clinics are available nationwide. Patients can self-refer or can be referred by their doctor.
Prices vary depending on brand and dosage	Prices vary depending on brand and dosage. Private prescription and consultation fees also apply.

List of UK medical cannabis clinics

Clinic Name	Phone	Email	Website
Cannabis Clinic Cardiff	07450 420420	info@cannabisclinic-cardiff.co.uk	https://www.cannabiscliniccardiff.co.uk
Cantourage Clinic	020 8050 9596	contact@cantourage-clinic.com	https://www.cantourageclinic.com/
Integro Medical Clinics	0800 464 7051	contact@integroclinics.com	https://www.integroclinics.com
Leva Clinic	020 4526 4622	info@levaclinic.com	https://www.levaclinic.com
LVL Health	0333 366 1033	info@lvlhealth.co.uk	https://lvlhealth.co.uk
Mamedica	0330 580 1170	info@mamedica.co.uk	https://www.mamedica.co.uk
My Access Clinics	0203 983 4007	info@myaccessclinics.com	http://myaccessclinics.co.uk
Sapphire Medical	020 7467 8345	enquiries@sapphire-clinics.com	https://www.sapphireclinics.com
The Medical Cannabis Clinics	0203 928 2813	info@themedicalcannabisclinics.com	https://themedicalcannabisclinics.com
Zerenia	0204 515 0797	info@zereniaclinic.co.uk	https://zereniaclinic.co.uk

For a Jersey/Guernsey/Isle of Man based clinic, visit <https://medicann.co.uk>