

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) and Medical Cannabis

- OSA is a serious condition. It interrupts sleep and can make you feel sleepy during the day. But it can have other harmful effects, too. Without effective treatment, OSA can lead to other diseases including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and premature death.
- Before trying medical cannabis products for OSA, try other OSA treatments known to be effective. CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) is effective in treating OSA. If you tried CPAP in the past and quit because you couldn't tolerate it, ask your health care provider about improvements to CPAP in recent years that have made it easier to use. CPAP is not the only therapy known to be effective for treating OSA. Talk to your health care provider about these other options.
- Very little research has been done on which medical cannabis products – if any – are effective for treating OSA. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine in April, 2018 issued a position statement opposing use of cannabis for treatment of obstructive sleep apnea: "... medical cannabis and/or its synthetic extracts should not be used for the treatment of OSA due to unreliable delivery methods and insufficient evidence of effectiveness, tolerability, and safety."
- If you do decide to purchase medical cannabis as an experiment in treating your OSA, make sure to work with your health care provider to assess how effective medical cannabis is for treating your OSA. This might require another sleep test. If the medical cannabis products you tried did not help your OSA enough, change to therapies other than medical cannabis.
- In order to certify you for the program, a health care provider will need to have a copy of the results of your most recent sleep study.
- Before each purchase of medical cannabis you will be asked if you have had a sleep study since your last purchase. If you have, you will be asked to provide the apnea hypopnea index (API), Respiratory Event Index (REI), or Respiratory Disturbance Index (RDI) in the sleep study report. The Office of Medical Cannabis asks these questions to assess how the medical cannabis program affects patients.
- A common side effect of medical cannabis is drowsiness. This is an important risk for patients who already feel drowsy during the day due to OSA. Take medical cannabis only before going to bed to reduce the risk of drowsiness as a side effect.

OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA (OSA) FOR PATIENTS

Minnesota Department of Health
PO Box 64882
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882
651-201-5598
health.cannabis@state.mn.us
mn.gov/medicalcannabis

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