



Using a vaporiser safely: a fact sheet

Who this is for. This is safety information for people who have already been prescribed a cannabis medicine to inhale, and their carers. It does not suggest that anyone should seek a prescription, or that any medicine will help any condition. It does not give doses. Your prescriber's instructions always come first.

In short

- Follow your prescriber's instructions first, then the instructions for your device.¹
- Never smoke your medicine,² and put nothing else in your vaporiser.³
- Lock your medicine and device away from children.⁴
- Never share your medicine or your device.⁵
- Do not drive if you feel any effect at all.⁶
- Report side effects and device problems on the Yellow Card scheme.⁷

Instructions first

Your prescriber decides how much you use, how often and how. If you are not sure, ask before you use it. Your clinic should check that you can get a suitable vaporiser and know how to use it safely. If no one has shown you, ask.¹

Then follow the instructions that came with your device. If they seem to disagree with your prescriber, ask your prescriber or the pharmacist who supplied your medicine before you go ahead. Never smoke your medicine: UK law does not allow it.²

Types of device

- **Dry herb vaporisers** heat the flower without burning it. Some are desktop units that plug in; others are handheld and run on a rechargeable battery. In lab tests, electric vaporisers with temperature control released the medicine reliably without burning it, but a gas-heated device burned some of the flower.⁸
- **Cartridge devices** are for people prescribed cannabis oil in cartridges. Use only the device your clinic or pharmacy says fits your cartridge.¹ Never refill a cartridge or add anything to it.³
- **E-cigarettes and vape pens** heat a nicotine liquid.⁹ They are not medical cannabis devices. Never put your medicine in one.

Temperature: what we know

A vaporiser should heat the flower enough to turn the medicine into vapour, but not enough to burn it. Burning is often said to start at about 230°C.¹⁰

Below that, small lab studies disagree about the best setting. One found a better balance of medicine to unwanted chemicals at 200°C and 230°C than at 170°C.¹¹ These studies are small and were done in labs, not with patients.^{8, 10, 11} Long-term effects are not known.¹² There is no agreed "safest" temperature.

What this means for you

- Use the setting your prescriber advises. If you have not been given one, ask.
- Do not turn the heat up to get a stronger effect without asking first.
- If you see smoke or smell burning, stop. The flower may be burning.⁸
- Heating may not kill moulds or bacteria on the flower.¹³ Keep your medicine dry, and do not use it if it looks, smells or feels different. Take it back to the pharmacy.¹⁴

Cleaning and care

Clean your device as its instructions say. In general:

- switch it off, unplug it and let it cool first
- use only the cleaning method and spare parts the maker recommends, and keep water away from the battery and electronics
- check the mouthpiece and seals for cracks, and do not use a damaged device.

Batteries and charging

Use only the charger that came with the device. Do not charge it overnight, check it while it charges, and unplug it when full. Replace a battery that is damaged, leaking or not working properly. Keep spare batteries in a plastic case, away from keys and coins.¹⁵

Never share

Your medicine is prescribed for you alone. Giving any of it to someone else, even a person with their own prescription, counts as supplying a controlled drug, which is a crime.⁵ UK prescribing guidance expects patients not to share.¹ Do not let anyone else use your vaporiser while your medicine is in it.

General information, not medical advice. Your prescriber's instructions come first.

Urgent help: NHS 111 (in Northern Ireland, your GP or GP out of hours service). In an emergency, call 999.

thegreenthistle.co.uk | James Clyne Gunn, Registered Nurse (Adult) | Written October 2026, next review October 2027

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Storage and children

- Keep your medicine in its original pharmacy container with the label on, somewhere cool and dry.¹⁴ The label shows the medicine is yours, which police may ask to see.¹⁶
- Store your medicine and your device where children cannot see or reach them, in a locked cabinet if you can. Child-resistant lids slow children down but may not stop them.⁴
- Cannabis can make children seriously unwell. Where it is legal in the US, there is evidence of more poisonings in children.¹⁷
- If a child swallows or breathes in any of your medicine, get help straight away. Call NHS 111, or 999 if they are very sleepy, struggling to breathe or will not wake.^{18, 19} If a pet eats any, call a vet.

Driving

Do not drive if you feel any effect. Inhaled cannabis acts within minutes. In one study, THC in the blood peaked within 30 minutes, and some effects on thinking and coordination lasted up to 6 hours on average.²⁰

The law gives a medical defence only if the medicine was prescribed, you took it as advised, and it did not make you unfit to drive.⁶ Follow your prescriber's timing advice. More:

thegreenthistle.co.uk/articles/driving

Travel

Carry your vaporiser and any spare batteries in your hand luggage, never in the hold, and do not charge it on the plane.²¹ Keep your medicine in its original packaging in your hand luggage, with your prescription or a letter from your prescriber. Before you go abroad, check the rules with the embassy of every country you will visit.²² More:

thegreenthistle.co.uk/articles/travelling-abroad

When something is wrong

Stop, and contact your clinic or GP the same day, if you have:

- a new or worse cough, wheeze, tight chest or breathlessness¹²
- strong anxiety, confusion, or seeing or hearing things others do not²³
- low mood, or changes in your mood or behaviour²³
- being sick again and again²³
- using more than prescribed, or finding it hard to cut down²³
- a burn, or a device that overheats, smokes or has a damaged or leaking battery¹⁵

Also tell your clinic if you start a new medicine, become pregnant or plan to, or are told you have a lung condition.¹

If your clinic or GP is closed, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, call your GP out of hours service.²⁴

Call 999 if someone has chest pain that will not go away, severe difficulty breathing, collapses or will not wake, or may be about to harm themselves.^{19, 25} Samaritans: 116 123, free, day or night.²⁵

Report it: the Yellow Card scheme

Anyone can report a suspected side effect, or a problem with a medicine, a medical device or an e-cigarette, to the MHRA's Yellow Card scheme at yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or on the Yellow Card app.⁷ Tell your clinic and your pharmacy too.¹

If your vaporiser is not a medical device and seems unsafe, report it to the Citizens Advice consumer helpline (England and Wales), Advice Direct Scotland, or your district council (Northern Ireland).²⁶ Not sure which applies? Ask your pharmacist.



Sources

All sources checked 12 October 2026. The numbers match the small numbers in the text.

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