

## NJSNA FACT Sheet:

# MEDICINAL CANNABIS IN NEW JERSEY

## WHAT IS THE MEDICINAL CANNABIS PROGRAM IN NEW JERSEY?

New Jersey's (NJ) Medicinal Cannabis Program (previously the Medicinal Marijuana Program) helps registered patients under the care of licensed healthcare practitioners to safely access cannabis-based medicine from regulated and monitored facilities. Nurses are encouraged to visit the NJ Cannabis Regulatory

Commission [website](#) for additional information.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE NURSE (ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE (APN), REGISTERED NURSE (RN), LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE (LPN)) IN ADMINISTERING MEDICINAL CANNABIS TO PATIENTS?

In NJ, nurses cannot assist with the administration of medicinal cannabis unless they are registered as a designated caregiver for the patient. Each patient in the NJ Medicinal Cannabis Program may have up to two designated caregivers, who are the only individuals permitted to assist with administering the cannabis product.



## CAN AN APN PRESCRIBE MEDICINAL CANNABIS TO A PATIENT?

A licensed APN may recommend, certify, and refer a patient to an Alternative Treatment Center (ATC) for use of medicinal cannabis. However, APNs cannot prescribe medicinal marijuana (cannabis), as it remains classified by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) as a Schedule I drug (DEA, n.d.). APNs may serve as a provider for a medicinal cannabis patient and conduct periodic assessments for program recertification as needed.

## CAN PATIENTS BRING THEIR MEDICINAL CANNABIS TO A HEALTHCARE FACILITY IN NEW JERSEY?

Healthcare facilities that receive federal funding typically prohibit the use of medicinal cannabis on their premises. This restriction is due to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) classifying marijuana (cannabis) as a Schedule I drug, defined as having no currently accepted medical use, a high potential for abuse, and a lack of accepted safety even under medical supervision (DEA, n.d.). Examples of Schedule I drugs include heroin, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), marijuana (cannabis), 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (ecstasy), methaqualone, and peyote (DEA, n.d.). As a result, patients are generally not permitted to bring, use, or store medicinal cannabis in these settings.



## WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF “IMPAIRMENT” IN NURSING PRACTICE IN NEW JERSEY?

The NJ Board of Nursing definition: “Impairment means an inability to function at an acceptable level of competency, or an incapacity to continue to practice with the requisite skill, safety, and judgment, as a result of alcohol or chemical dependency, a psychiatric or emotional disorder, senility or a disabling physical disorder” (N.J. Stat. Ann., 2019).

Nurses exhibiting signs of impairment should be considered for referral to the Institute for Nursing’s Recovery and Monitoring Program (RAMP). RAMP provides services such as impairment evaluations, counseling, and supportive rehabilitation programs designed to help nurses return to safe and effective practice (NJSNA, n.d.)

## HOW CAN A NURSE PREVENT EXPOSURE TO MEDICINAL CANNABIS WHEN WORKING IN A COMMUNITY SETTING WITH HOME VISITATION, E.G. VISITING NURSE, HOSPICE CARE ?

All nurses working in community settings should avoid exposure to marijuana smoke or vapor and wear gloves when handling oils, edibles, patches, tinctures, capsules, or other products/food containing marijuana.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MARIJUANA IMPAIRMENT?

**CANNABIS USE IMPACTS BRAIN REGIONS INVOLVED IN MEMORY, LEARNING, ATTENTION, DECISION-MAKING, COORDINATION, EMOTION, AND REACTION TIME (CDC, 2025).**

**IT CAN ALTER TIME PERCEPTION, IMPAIR THINKING, MEMORY, MOVEMENT, AND INCREASE IRRITABILITY OR RESTLESSNESS (NIDA, 2024).**

**OTHER SIDE EFFECTS INCLUDE INCREASED APPETITE, ELEVATED HEART RATE, AND RESPIRATORY ISSUES (NIDA, 2024).**

## HOW LONG DO THE EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA LAST?

While tetrahydocannabinol (THC), the primary psychoactive compound in cannabis, can remain in the body for days or even weeks, the noticeable effects of smoked marijuana typically last one to three hours, whereas effects from edibles or marijuana-infused drinks may persist for several hours (NIDA, 2018).

## HOW LONG DOES MARIJUANA REMAIN IN THE BODY AND IDENTIFIABLE THROUGH TESTING?

(AMERICAN ADDICTION CENTERS, 2025)

**How Long Does Marijuana Stay in Your System?**

	Hair Up to 90 days
	Urine 30 days or more
	Saliva 24 hours
	Blood 12 hours





## CAN NURSES USE MEDICINAL CANNABIS AND STILL PRACTICE?

Licensed nurses have a responsibility to ensure that their use of medicinal cannabis does not impair their ability to practice safely. Any impairment while practicing, even if due to authorized medicinal cannabis use, must be reported to the NJ Board of Nursing. Some health care facilities have a zero-tolerance policy regarding the use of medicinal cannabis in the workplace. It is the nurse's responsibility to decide whether to disclose their status as a registered medicinal cannabis patient to their employer. When appropriate, the NJSNA recommends that nurses obtain a "fit for duty" evaluation from an independent healthcare provider qualified to assess clinical fitness for practice.

## WHAT ABOUT EMPLOYMENT SCREENING FOR MARIJUANA?

### DRUG SCREENING:

EMPLOYERS OFTEN INCLUDE DRUG SCREENING, INCLUDING MARIJUANA, AS PART OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT PHYSICALS. SCREENING POLICIES VARY BY EMPLOYER. THE NJSNA RECOMMENDS DRUG SCREENING WHEN THERE IS EVIDENCE OF IMPAIRMENT.

## WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF CANNABIS USE DURING PREGNANCY?

Cannabis use during pregnancy is linked to serious risks, including low birth weight, preterm birth, death within the first year, and other negative outcomes (NIDA, 2024). Given its potential impact on the developing brain, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists advises against cannabis use while trying to conceive, during pregnancy, and while breastfeeding (NIDA, 2024).

# NURSING ETHICS

NJ Nurses are expected to demonstrate safe nursing practice in accordance with the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses, Provision 3.4 and 3.5 in relation to the care of medical marijuana patients as well as nurses themselves who are prescribed medicinal cannabis (ANA, 2025).

### ANA CODE OF ETHICS

- **Ethics 3.4 Professional Responsibility in Promoting a Culture of Safety**
  - Nurses should participate in the development, implementation and review and adherence to policies that promote patient health and safety.... while assuring nurses are held accountable for individual practice
- **ANA 3.5 Protection of Patient Health and Safety by Acting on Questionable Practice**
  - Nurses must be alert to and take appropriate action in all instances of incompetent, unethical, illegal or impaired practice .....and follow established practice and policy for reporting and handling questionable practices...
- **ANA 3.6 Patient Protection and Impaired Practice**
  - Nurses must protect the patient, the public and the profession from potential harm when practice appears to be impaired..... take action to protect patients and to ensure that the impaired individual receives assistance...( ANA, 2015).  
<https://www.nursingworld.org/coe-view-only>

## REFERENCES:

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**Formulated:** 3/18/2020

**Revised:** COPP Position Statement Subcommittee 9/8/2025

**Approved:** Congress on Policy and Practice 3/24/2020 and 9/9/2025

**Adopted:** NJSNA Board of Directors 3/24/2020 and 9/16/2025