



HAWAII MEDICAL CANNABIS NEWSLETTER

The Science

Using medical cannabis to manage nausea and vomiting

Cannabis is one of the oldest pharmacological remedies for nausea and vomiting.¹ In the 1970s, scientists discovered that THC, a key compound in cannabis, could reduce chemotherapy-induced nausea when other medications failed. Today's research continues to explore how cannabis can help with nausea caused by a variety of medical conditions.

What triggers nausea?

Nausea is a symptom that can be triggered by many different factors:

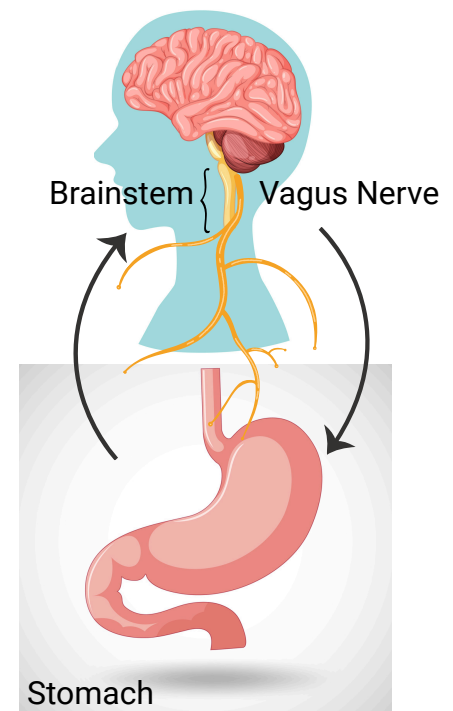
- **Irritation to the digestive** (gastrointestinal) **tract**—infections, toxins, certain medications, food poisoning, anything that irritates the stomach or intestines
- **Chemicals or drugs**—chemotherapy
- **Hormonal changes**
- **Psychological factors**—stress or anxiety
- **Sensory stimuli**—bad smells, sights, or tastes
- **Motion sickness**
- **Intestinal disorders**—irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- **Central nervous system disorders**—migraines or brain injury
- Issues with the heart, kidneys, or other organs²

What regulates nausea and vomiting?

Nausea and vomiting are mainly regulated by the gut-brain axis—the two-way communication system between your gut and brain.

The **gut** has receptors that detect chemical irritants (toxins, acids) or physical changes (stretching, bloating). When these receptors sense something not normal, they send signals via mainly the **vagus nerve** and spinal pathways to the areas in the **brainstem** that coordinates nausea and vomiting. The brainstem also receives signals from the inner ear (balance), higher brain centers (emotions or pain), and sensory organs.

When receiving signals, the brainstem activates the vomiting reflex, such as diaphragm and stomach muscle contractions. The brain and the gut releases neurotransmitters (serotonin, dopamine, and histamine) and endocannabinoids to modulate nausea and vomiting. Standard medications that reduce nausea and vomiting block these neurotransmitters (but not endocannabinoids).³



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How can cannabis help with nausea?

The **endocannabinoid system (ECS)** plays a key role in managing nausea and vomiting, mainly by calming the gut and sensory nerve signals to reduce the triggers that activate nausea and vomiting reflexes.

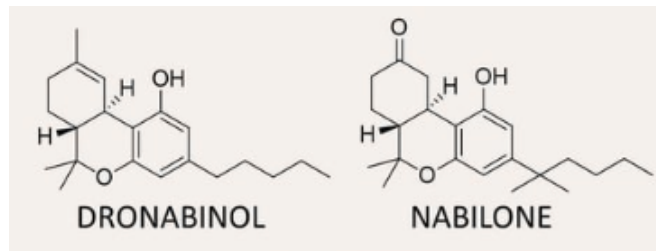
The ECS has two main receptors:

- CB1 receptors: abundant in the brain, including regions involved in nausea and vomiting
- CB2 receptors: mostly in the immune system and peripheral organs; they have a lesser role in nausea

When endocannabinoids (like anandamide or 2AG) or cannabinoids (like THC or CBD) bind to CB1 receptors, they activate a response that inhibits the release of neurotransmitters involved in nausea and vomiting.



Evidence and guidance



The most robust studies have been conducted in adult cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

- The FDA has approved synthetic THC cannabinoid medications dronabinol and nabilone for the treatment of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV).⁴
- The American Society of Clinical Oncology found that cannabis and/or cannabinoids may improve CINV when added to other anti-vomiting medications.⁵
- Pre-clinical studies show THC, CBD, THCA, and CBDA reduced nausea and vomiting in different animals.⁶

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Be safe

Cannabinoid-based products should not be used to treat nausea or vomiting due to pregnancy or cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome (CHS).

- Cannabis used during pregnancy or breastfeeding can negatively affect the baby.⁷ Please consult your healthcare provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- High doses of THC on a long-term basis can cause CHS, which is severe nausea and vomiting that occurs in cycles. Prolonged use of high doses changes the ECS, which can dysregulate systems that manages your stress and anxiety, temperature, sensory, and neurotransmitters.³



People with weakened immune systems have a higher risk of lung infections from inhaling cannabis, since the plant can carry mold and germs that may lead to serious or even deadly illness.⁸ Talk to your provider if inhalation is best for you.

What's New Hawai'i State Law

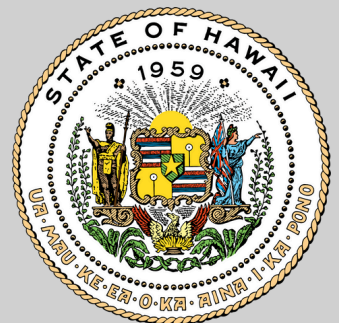
New Laws Expand and Strengthen Hawai'i's Medical Cannabis Program

Two new laws were enacted this year that significantly expand access and oversight within Hawai'i's Medical Cannabis Program.

Act 46, SLH 2025 (SB1429) – Signed May 14, 2025

This law restores key caregiver rights and provides administrative oversight:

- Caregivers may once again cultivate medical cannabis on behalf of their qualifying patients.
- A single caregiver may now provide care for up to five qualifying patients.
- The Office of Medical Cannabis Control and Regulation (OMCCR) can regulate caregivers like other health programs. Previously, enforcement was handled solely by law enforcement. Now, the OMCCR can regulate through fines, suspensions, and corrective actions, similar to other health programs in the state. For patients, this means more safeguards, quality products, and increased stability within the medical cannabis program.





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Act 241, SLH 2025 (HB302) – Signed June 27, 2025

This comprehensive law enhances patient access and regulatory oversight:

- The list of qualifying conditions is expanded to include any condition being actively treated by a medical provider, as well as patients receiving hospice care.
- All medical provider visits related to certification may now be conducted via telehealth, improving access for patients in rural areas or with mobility issues.
- A cap is placed on fees charged by certifying providers to ensure affordability.
- The OMCCR is authorized to inspect certifying medical providers' records to ensure compliance with patient safety requirements, including taking a complete medical history, evaluating potential drug interactions with cannabis, and providing appropriate care. The OMCCR may initiate a review when necessary, such as when patients raise serious concerns about their care.
- A new nuisance abatement unit within the Attorney General's office is funded with the ability to use civil enforcement tools, like fines and lawsuits, to address illegal cannabis activity.
- A new cannabis cultivation license type is created to increase the variety of flower and products available at dispensaries. This license will be rolled out in 2028, with OMCCR conducting outreach and program development over the next year.

| State of Hawaii 329 Medical Cannabis | |
|--|---|
| Registration Number: 2019000067 |  |
| Start Date: 09/30/2018 Expiration Date: 09/30/2019 | |
| <hr/> | |
| Patient Last Name: Doe | |
| First, Middle, Suffix: John A | |
| Date of Birth: 01/01/1970 | |
| <hr/> | |
| Caregiver Last Name: Smith | |
| First, Middle, Suffix: Jane A | |
| Date of Birth: 02/02/1975 | |
| <hr/> | |
| Physician/APRN Name: /s/ EDNA J SMITH, APRN | |

| State of Hawaii 329 Medical Cannabis | |
|--|---|
| Grow Site: |  |
| 9876 Hawaii Street Honolulu 96822 | |
| <hr/> | |
| The Medical Cannabis Program is managed by the Hawaii State Department of Health. Information Hotline: call (808) 733-2177 for general information about the program. | |

OMCCR acknowledges that these acts raise important questions and concerns in the medical cannabis community. We are committed to engaging in open dialogue through public listening sessions and the formal rulemaking process to address these concerns. Our aim is to support patients, caregivers, and providers through thoughtful implementation and community engagement.

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FREE Continuing Medical Education (CME)

The Hawai'i Department of Health, OMCCR is offering healthcare professionals FREE continuing medical education (CME) on the therapeutic use of medical cannabis, safe use, and best clinical practices.

Over 13% of the state's population currently uses cannabis. This makes it essential for **all physicians**, not only certifying medical providers, to understand both cannabis use and risks. Such knowledge enables providers to engage in informed, non-judgmental conversations with patients, recognize potential health effects, and guide appropriate care. Misinformation and the stigma around cannabis remain common, underscoring the need for accurate, evidence-based guidance. Our goal is to equip all healthcare professionals with the knowledge to better serve patients and the broader community.

This is a great opportunity for certifying providers, PCPs, or treating physicians to learn more about how medical cannabis can help patients, and how they can guide patients to use it safely and effectively.

Details here: [CME/CE Flyer](#).⁹ The first 200 professionals to enroll in the program are FREE.

Medical Education Day on Maui, Saturday, Nov. 8, 2025



OMCCR event on Maui

Saturday, November 8th

November 8th we will be on Maui for a FREE medical educational event tailored for Hawai'i's medical cannabis patients and caregivers. Gain valuable insights into the science of cannabis, safe use practices, and the best applications to support your health and wellness. If you are a Maui resident, watch your email for an invite to attend in person or online!

Coming Soon

- Information on OMCCR listening sessions and community engagement
- Guidance for caregivers who want to grow medical cannabis or expand the care they provide

We welcome your feedback and look forward to working together to strengthen Hawai'i's medical cannabis system.

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