



# HEALER



## Cannabis Shopping Guide

This guide will help you easily navigate your shopping trip to a medical cannabis supplier, avoid common pitfalls, have a positive experience, and bring home the right medicine for our Introduction to Cannabis Program.

Patients who are new to medical cannabis often face challenges finding access to high quality medicines that meet their specific health needs. The cannabis marketplace is often unregulated, can be confusing, and the industry lacks standards in product labeling and dosage instructions. Availability of products can change quickly, and everyone seems to have different advice on what to buy.

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[www.Healer.com](http://www.Healer.com)

## Step 1: Find a high quality medical cannabis provider.

The following steps can help you determine which cannabis producers and retailers are providing the highest quality products:

1. Talk with other patients. Word-of-mouth is often the best source of information about which cannabis producers are making the highest quality medicine. Consider attending a support group or chat with other patients in an online forum.
2. Call a local cannabis-testing laboratory and ask them which suppliers are consistently bringing in top quality products.
3. Call a few suppliers and ask the following questions. By the time you get their responses, you'll likely be able to tell if they're the kind of establishment you want to buy medicine from.
  - a. Do you use an independent laboratory to test your medicine for potency and/or contamination (mold, bacteria, pesticides, solvents)?
  - b. Do you carry organic or pesticide-free products?
  - c. Do you carry CBD-rich products (not from industrial hemp)?
  - d. Do you sell non-smokable forms of cannabis, such as oils, tinctures or salves?
  - e. What is the average cost per gram of herbal cannabis?

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## Step 2: On your first trip to the medical cannabis supplier.

1. Spend less than \$100 on medicine. Many new patients are convinced to buy much more than they need. You may also want to purchase a vaporizer for \$50-\$400 (more on vaporizers below).
2. Decide if you want to use a specific delivery method (e.g. inhalation, oral, topical). If you're not sure, we recommend trying both inhalation and oral for most conditions, plus topical if you're treating pain or skin conditions.
3. Purchase small amounts of a variety of different products. Every person has an individualized response to cannabis, and the purpose of your first trip is to sample enough products to get a better idea of what's right for you.

# Shopping List

## ○ Raw Cannabis Flowers – for inhalation and raw consumption

- Choose 2-4 strains from the following categories and purchase 1 gram each. Make your final selection by choosing the bud that has the most appealing aroma to you.[1]
- Daytime strain (energizing and uplifting, often called sativa)
- Nighttime strain (promotes sleep and relaxation, often called indica)
- Condition specific strain (most popular with other people who have your same condition)
- Non-impairing strain (CBD-dominant)[2]

## ○ Inhalation Device:

- Vaporizers: Herbal vaporizers heat the cannabis flower to a temperature that causes the medicinal components to evaporate, but do not burn the plant material, producing a healthier and more cost-effective method to inhale cannabis. Tabletop, AC-powered models are often less expensive, easier to use and clean, and longer lasting. Purchase a portable, battery-operated model only if you're sure you want the convenience. Your vaporizer should have a variable temperature gauge so you can control the smoke content of the vapor. Avoid products that expose plastic to high temperatures so you don't have to inhale plastic fumes.
- Smoking: use a glass or stone pipe with a long stem and without water filtration. Purchase a hemp/beeswax wick so you can avoid inhaling lighter fumes.
- Vapor pens: These products heat an oil that's been extracted from cannabis flowers. They are extremely convenient and discrete, but sometimes fail to convey the full medical properties of vaporized flower or smoke. Avoid products that use polyethylene glycol, glycerol, mct oil, vegetable oil and other solvents associated with toxic byproducts after heating. Some vape oils are much stronger than smoke or herbal vapor. Be sure to find out the THC potency of the oil – new users should avoid products with greater than 70% THC to allow for careful dosing and to avoid accidental overdose.

## ○ Cannabis Tincture – for oral use

- Look for products that have been lab tested to contain a known potency (milligrams cannabinoids per milliliter of tincture). Potencies between 10mg/ml and 50 mg/ml work best for most users. It's important to make sure the label or associated lab test checked for decarboxylation (heat activation) – at least 50% decarboxylation is preferable. Heated (e.g. THC) and unheated (e.g. THCA) products have very different medicinal effects.
- Choose an oil-based tincture if available. Alcohol-based tinctures can be harsh in the mouth, and glycerin-based tinctures are often very low in potency, but any of the three types of tinctures can make a good medicine if they're prepared correctly and used in the right dosage.
- Most tinctures are made from a blend of strains. If specific strain tinctures are available, choose based on your needs for daytime, nighttime, condition-specific, or non-impairing.
- Purchase the equivalent of 30-100 mg of cannabinoids to evaluate the product.

## ○ Topical Cannabis Salves

- Purchase a small amount to try on areas of pain, inflammation, or itching.

## ○ Other Useful Supplies

- Small digital scale
- 5ml oral syringe for accurate tincture dosing
- Herb grinder for use with vaporizer
- Glass jars for storage
- Timer or stopwatch

## ○ Endocannabinoid-enhancing foods

- Hemp seeds
- Flax seeds (grind at home in a coffee grinder)
- Chia Seeds
- Walnuts
- Sardines and anchovies
- Raw chocolate (cocoa nibs, raw cocoa powder)
- Dark chocolate (at least 70% dark)
- Maca root powder (good for smoothies)
- Unpasteurized fermented food (e.g. sauerkraut)

## ○ What to Avoid for Beginners:

- Edibles and capsules
- Hemp-based CBD products
- Concentrates (i.e. hash, kief, dabs, wax, shatter, RSO, extract)
- Liquid-based vaporizers
- Highest-potency THC strains

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## What's Indica, Sativa, and Hybrid?

These terms describe three categories of cannabis strains that may have distinct characteristics. Indica strains may be better for pain relief and more sedating. Sativa strains may be more energizing, mentally stimulating and mood lifting. Hybrid strains may offer the best of both worlds. In reality, these classifications are often not an effective way to guide consumer choice. Use the guidelines above to find the best products instead of choosing based on indica vs sativa.

## What about strain names?

While some strains are named for their medicinal qualities, many have names that are not descriptive, and some not at all appropriate for a healing herb. Two products with the same strain name, from different producers or different harvests, may in fact have very different medicinal effects. The best way to distinguish between strains is to look closely and observe the aroma.

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[1] The compounds in cannabis that create the aroma, known as terpenes, are physiologically active and can modify the medicinal effect.

[2] The psychoactivity of a strain is mostly based on the ratio of CBD:THC. At 1:1 the psychoactivity begins to diminish, and at 4:1 CBD:THC or higher most users will not experience a psychoactive effect.