Short answer: yes, some cannabis-based products can be prescribed legally in the UK, but that does not make cannabis generally legal. The rules depend on what product you have, who prescribed it, how it was supplied and how you use it. Recreational cannabis remains illegal, and a prescription is not permission to grow, buy or import cannabis on your own.

It also helps to clarify what "legal" means. Are you asking whether a doctor may prescribe a product, whether you may possess it, or whether a particular supplier can lawfully provide it? Those are related but separate questions. This guide explains the position in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as of November 2026. It is general information, not individual legal or medical advice.

What changed in 2018?

On 1 November 2018, the UK rescheduled a limited category of products known as **cannabis-based products for medicinal use in humans** (CBPMs). Before the change, doctors faced significant restrictions on prescribing cannabis-based products. After it, qualifying products could be prescribed under specified controlled-drug rules.

The change did *not* legalise cannabis for recreational use or create a general right to obtain medical cannabis. It opened a tightly controlled route for prescribing certain products to patients with an appropriate clinical need. The product must meet the legal definition of a CBPM, and it must be prescribed and supplied in line with the applicable rules.

Many prescribed cannabis-based products are controlled as **Schedule 2** drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001. That is why people search for "schedule 2 cannabis UK". The schedule is a regulatory category, not a declaration that a product is safe, suitable for everyone or freely available. Schedule 2 drugs are subject to strict controls on prescribing, supply, record-keeping and possession.

When is medical cannabis legal to possess?

In general, possession can be lawful when you have a valid prescription for the relevant product and it was obtained through a lawful supply chain. The product and its use must match the prescription and applicable rules. Keep it in its original packaging and retain the prescription label and supporting documents, especially when travelling or if you need to explain your treatment.

A prescription does not legalise every form of cannabis. It does not cover cannabis bought from an unlicensed seller, a friend's product, a product you have grown yourself or a different product obtained without authorisation. Nor does it mean you can share your medicine with someone else. Prescribed controlled drugs are for the named patient.

What remains illegal or restricted?

- **Recreational use:** Cannabis remains a controlled drug in the UK. The 2018 change did not legalise recreational possession, use or supply.
- **Self-prescribing:** You cannot make cannabis lawful by deciding it helps your symptoms, buying it yourself or asking a non-qualifying prescriber to initiate treatment.
- **Unauthorised supply:** Selling, sharing or supplying cannabis outside the lawful system can be a criminal matter, even where the recipient says they use it for a medical reason.

- **Growing plants:** A patient prescription does not authorise home cultivation.
- **Importing:** Do not assume that a prescription, product or cannabis flower bought abroad may be brought into the UK. Importing controlled drugs can require specific permissions and may create serious legal risks. Check the requirements with the Home Office and relevant border authorities before travelling with any product.
- **Smoking:** A prescription is not permission to smoke cannabis. The legal rules distinguish smoking from other prescribed methods of administration.

Some patients are prescribed cannabis flower for use with a dry-herb vaporiser. **Vaping is not the same as smoking**: a vaporiser heats the material to release vapour rather than burning it. Follow the prescriber's and pharmacist's instructions about the device and method. Do not assume that a nicotine vape, an oil cartridge or a method used recreationally is interchangeable with the prescribed treatment.

Who can prescribe cannabis in the UK?

Initiation of treatment is restricted to an appropriate doctor on the **General Medical Council's Specialist Register**. In practice, this generally means a specialist doctor working in a relevant clinical area who can assess the patient's condition, previous treatment and potential risks. A patient cannot simply ask a GP to start a cannabis prescription: GPs do not initiate this specialist treatment.

The GMC register is a useful check when assessing a clinician's credentials. It confirms specialist registration, but it does not by itself prove that a particular clinic is suitable, that a treatment is right for you, or that a product will be available. Ask who will assess you, what their specialty is, and who will manage follow-up and any problems with the medicine.





There may be arrangements for another doctor to continue treatment after a specialist has initiated it, but this depends on the circumstances and the relevant prescribing responsibilities. Do not assume your GP will agree to shared care or take over prescribing. Ask the clinic and your GP directly, and get the answer before relying on it.

NHS access versus private access

NHS prescriptions

NHS access exists, but it remains limited. NICE guidance supports cannabis-based products in specific circumstances, including certain forms of severe epilepsy, chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting, and multiple-sclerosis spasticity. The criteria differ by condition and product, and an NHS clinician will consider the evidence, previous treatments and individual circumstances.

That can make the pathway narrow and specialist-led. A patient may have symptoms that they believe could benefit from cannabis-based treatment but still not meet NHS guidance or local clinical criteria. Availability and referral routes may also vary. Ask the relevant NHS specialist about the guidance for your diagnosis rather than relying on online claims that a particular condition automatically qualifies.

Private clinics

Private clinics may assess patients who are not receiving an NHS prescription, but a private consultation does not guarantee eligibility or a prescription. The clinician must still assess whether treatment is clinically appropriate and prescribe within the law. Clinics may ask about diagnosis, medical records, previous treatments, current medicines and relevant risks.

Private treatment can involve costs for an initial consultation, follow-up appointments and the prescribed product. Prices vary by clinic, product, dose and how often a patient needs review; there is no single reliable “medical cannabis price”. Before booking, request a written explanation of likely fees, what follow-up costs, how prescriptions are handled and what happens if the clinician decides treatment is unsuitable.

For example, Releaf is a company patients may encounter while researching private access. Treat any clinic’s own information as a starting point, not independent proof of clinical quality or likely outcomes. Check the

prescribing clinician's credentials, the service's terms, the pharmacy and supply arrangements, and whether the proposed treatment fits your circumstances.

How to check a clinic or provider

Online research can help you build a shortlist, but marketing signals are not the same as clinical evidence. A simple checklist can reduce the chance of relying on one persuasive website or a handful of reviews:

1. **Check the clinician:** Look up the doctor on the GMC register and confirm specialist registration.
2. **Ask how prescribing works:** Find out who makes the clinical decision, who issues the prescription and which pharmacy supplies the product.
3. **Get the full cost picture:** Ask for consultation, follow-up, prescription and medicine costs, including how fees may change over time.
4. **Read the terms:** Check cancellation rules, review requirements, delivery arrangements and what support is available if you have side effects.
5. **Compare claims with guidance:** Be cautious of promises of guaranteed eligibility, guaranteed results or an instant prescription.

Trustpilot can show customer feedback about a company, but reviews are not a medical assessment. They may describe customer service, delivery or billing rather than clinical quality, and a review score cannot establish whether a prescription is appropriate. Read a range of reviews and check their dates and detail.

Similarweb is a web-traffic estimation tool. It can offer a rough indication of a site's online reach or traffic patterns, but it does not verify a clinic's licence, clinician registration, product quality or treatment outcomes. Use it as a market-research tool, not a safety or regulatory check.

theukrules.co.uk

If you have a dispute or are unsure about the legal implications of a prescription, a solicitor such as Irwin Mitchell may be able to advise on the relevant legal issue. Be clear about the question: possession, prescription, supply, travel or employment-related concerns may involve different facts and rules. This article is not a substitute for advice from a qualified solicitor or clinician.

Travelling, driving and everyday questions

Having a lawful prescription does not remove every restriction. Before taking a prescribed product across a border, check the rules for both the country you are leaving and the country you are entering. Controlled-drug requirements differ between jurisdictions, and a UK prescription may not be recognised abroad. Carrying the product in its original packaging and having prescription documentation is sensible, but it does not replace any required permit.

Driving is another area where patients should seek specific advice. Do not drive if you are impaired or unfit to do so. The rules around prescribed medication and drug-driving are fact-sensitive, so ask your prescriber or pharmacist what applies to your medicine and circumstances. A prescription should not be treated as a blanket exemption from road-safety law.

Bottom line: is medical cannabis legal in the UK in 2026?

Some medical cannabis is legal in the UK when it is properly prescribed by an eligible specialist and supplied through a lawful route. The 2018 rescheduling made that controlled medical pathway possible; it did not legalise cannabis generally. Recreational use, unauthorised possession and supply, home growing and self-prescribing remain outside the lawful medical system.

- Check that the prescriber is appropriately specialist-registered.
- Confirm that the product is prescribed to you and supplied lawfully.
- Do not smoke it, share it, grow it or import it without checking the rules.
- Compare NHS and private routes, and get private costs in writing.
- Use Trustpilot or Similarweb only for what they can show; neither replaces clinical or regulatory checks.

That is the practical answer to “medical cannabis legal UK”: legal in a defined, closely regulated medical context—not “fully legal” in the everyday sense of being freely available.