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Medical cannabis is finally accessible to UK patients by prescription, opening new therapeutic options for those with qualifying conditions. However, starting treatment involves several key considerations that many patients and prescribers overlook. This checklist breaks down the essentials so you can begin your medical cannabis treatment safely, cost-effectively, and knowledgeably.

## 1. Understand How Medical Cannabis is Used in the UK: Vaporisation, Not Smoking

First up, it's vital to know the UK legal and medical context: **prescribed cannabis must be vaporised, not smoked**. Although phrases like "smokable cannabis" get tossed around casually, these don't reflect the regulated practice here.

### Why not smoking?

- Smoking involves combustion — burning the plant material — producing harmful by-products like tar, carbon monoxide, and carcinogens.
- In contrast, vaporisation heats the cannabis to a temperature where active compounds (cannabinoids and terpenes) vaporise, but the plant doesn't burn.

### Health impact:



- Combustion by-products increase respiratory risks and irritate airways.
- Vaporisation reduces these risks significantly, offering a cleaner way to inhale cannabis extracts.

So when your doctor or pharmacist talks about "inhalation," think vaporiser, not a joint or pipe.



## 2. Why the Device Matters: More Than Just a Gadget

Treating medical cannabis like any other medicine means dosing, safety, and consistent delivery are critical. The vaporiser device is not a mere accessory—it's an essential piece of the treatment.

### Device as part of treatment: what you need to know

- **Recommended temperature range:** Most medical-grade vaporisers operate between 180°C to 220°C (356°F to 428°F). This range effectively vaporises cannabinoids without harmful combustion.
- **Consistency:** Devices with precise temperature controls ensure consistent dosing by delivering the same cannabinoid profile each time.
- **Ease of use & cleaning:** Some devices are complicated or tedious to clean, which may discourage adherence.
- **Compatibility:** Ensure the device works with the specific medical cannabis products you are prescribed—dry flower, oils, or concentrates.

### Device purchase question: buy or rent?

Many pharmacies sell or rent devices compatible with prescribed cannabis. Since the device is integral for proper dosing and safety:

1. Check if your pharmacy offers devices packaged or bundled with your prescribed medicine.
2. Ask about warranties and replacement parts, which affect long-term cost and reliability.
3. Consider rental options to reduce upfront costs if you're trying out vaporised cannabis for the first time.

## 3. Monthly Cost Based on Dose: Plan Your Budget Realistically

Cost is often the elephant in the room. Despite NHS availability, many medical cannabis prescriptions in the UK come through private routes, where patients shoulder costs themselves. Let's break this down:

### What influences monthly cost?

- **Daily dose:** More milligrams of THC or CBD means more product—directly increasing monthly spend.

- **Product type:** Extracts and oils vs. flower differ in price per mg of cannabinoids.
- **Device costs:** One-off or recurring expenses for vaporisers factor into your total.
- **Pharmacy pricing:** Some pharmacies charge a dispensing fee or premium for cannabis medicines.

## Example cost breakdown

Dose (Total mg THC + CBD/day) Monthly Cannabis Medicine Cost Device Purchase (one-off) Estimated Monthly Device Cost\* Total Estimated Monthly Cost  
 20 mg £120 £150 £15 (amortised over 12 months) £135 - £150 initially, then £135 monthly  
 50 mg £300 £150 £15 £315 - £330 initially, then £315 monthly  
 \*Device cost amortised assuming 1 year usage

Knowing your daily dose and product price helps you predict monthly outlay and plan accordingly.

## 4. Pharmacy and GPhC Regulation: What Protects You as a Patient?

Medical [medical cannabis vaping](#) cannabis in the UK is tightly regulated to ensure safety and quality. Two key regulatory layers:

- **Pharmacy regulation:** Medicines containing cannabis must be dispensed by registered pharmacies following standard protocols.
- **The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC):** The GPhC regulates pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, requiring compliance with legal standards, record-keeping, and correct counselling.

This means patients should always:

- Receive medicines from a pharmacy legally authorised to handle controlled drugs.
- Get clear instructions on how to use their vaporiser and dose the medicine.
- Have access to advice on side effects, interactions, and storage.

If you encounter pharmacies offering “smokable” cannabis or offering devices outside medical guidance, these are red flags identifying non-compliant practice.

## 5. Bonus: What to Ask Your Prescriber Before Starting

1. What cannabis product do you recommend and why? (Flower, oil, concentrate, etc.)
2. What is the starting dose and how will it be adjusted?
3. Which vaporiser device do you suggest using, and where can I get it?
4. What temperature range should I use on my vaporiser?
5. How often should I check in about effectiveness and side effects?
6. Are there any interactions with my current medications?
7. What are the expected monthly costs based on my dose?

## Summary Checklist Before Your First Medical Cannabis Prescription

- **Confirm prescribed product form:** vaporised only, no smoking
- **Understand vaporiser requirements:** recommended temperature 180-220°C
- **Decide on device acquisition:** buy, rent or pharmacy-provided
- **Calculate monthly cost:** dose x product price + device amortisation

- **Use regulated pharmacies:** GPhC-registered and compliant dispensing
- **Discuss dosing plan and follow-up with prescriber**

Starting medical cannabis treatment in the UK means becoming informed and equipped. Use this checklist to guide conversations with your healthcare team and plan your treatment journey confidently.

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