

Medical Cannabis Laws and Chronic Pain

Nineteen of the 25 state medical cannabis laws allow patients to qualify if they suffer from pain. This ensures patients with a variety of excruciating conditions — from phantom pain from amputations to rare diseases like multiple congenital cartilogenous exostosis — are allowed to use a far less dangerous treatment option than prescription painkillers with their physicians’ recommendation. Cannabis is also an important option for pain patients who do not respond to other treatments.

The variation in the different medical cannabis states, with some being extremely restrictive and others making it easier for patients with chronic pain to have the option of medical cannabis, can be seen below.

Language	State(s)
Any condition that a physician believes cannabis may alleviate qualifies	California and Washington, D.C.
“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition, or treatment [for such conditions, which produces] ... severe pain ”	Colorado, Hawaii, and Maryland
“A medical condition or treatment for a medical condition that produces ... severe pain ”	Nevada and Oregon
“A chronic or debilitating disease or its treatment that produces ... severe pain ”	Alaska
“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment that produces ... severe and chronic pain ”	Arizona and Michigan
“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition, or its treatment, that produces ... debilitating, chronic pain ”	Rhode Island
“ Painful peripheral neuropathy ” and “ severe chronic pain ” with objective proof and two physician certifications	New Mexico
“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment that produces ... severe, debilitating pain, that has not responded to previously prescribed medication or surgical measures for more than 3 months or for which other treatment options produced serious side effects ”	Delaware

<p>“Intractable pain ... [which is] unrelieved by standard medical treatments and medications”</p>	<p>Washington</p>
<p>“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment that produces intractable pain, which is pain that has not responded to ordinary medical or surgical measures for more than 6 months”</p>	<p>Maine</p>
<p>A condition causing “intractable pain ... and progressing to such an extent that one or more of a patient’s major life activities is substantially limited”</p>	<p>Massachusetts</p>
<p>Intractable pain — “a pain state in which the cause of the pain cannot be removed or otherwise treated with the consent of the patient and which, in the generally accepted course of medical practice, no relief or cure of the cause of the pain is possible, or none has been found after reasonable efforts.”</p>	<p>Minnesota <i>(effective August 2016)</i></p>
<p>“severe chronic pain that is persistent pain of severe intensity that significantly interferes with daily activities as documented by the patient’s treating physician and by:</p> <p>(i) objective proof of the etiology of the pain, including relevant and necessary diagnostic tests that may include but are not limited to the results of an x-ray, computerized tomography scan, or magnetic resonance imaging; or</p> <p>(ii) confirmation of that diagnosis from a second physician who is independent of the treating physician and who conducts a physical examination”</p>	<p>Montana</p>
<p>“Pain that is either...chronic and severe or intractable.”</p>	<p>Ohio</p>
<p>Severe chronic or intractable pain of neuropathic origin or severe chronic or intractable pain in which conventional therapeutic intervention and opiate therapy is contraindicated or ineffective.</p>	<p>Pennsylvania</p>