

For people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) in the UK, managing spasticity—the stiff, uncontrollable muscle stiffness and spasms—can be a daily challenge. Since 2018, the availability of cannabis-based medicinal products has changed the treatment landscape, particularly for those considering THC:CBD spray as an option.

This blog breaks down what a **four-week THC:CBD spray trial** means, the history behind its legal and NHS status, and what MS patients in the UK should know about accessing this treatment under specialist care. We'll also highlight key tools like medicalcannabis.co.uk and releaf.co.uk for further information.

The 2018 Rescheduling: What Changed for Cannabis-Based Medicines?

Before 2018, all cannabis-derived products were strictly classified as Schedule 1 drugs in the UK, meaning they were considered to have no medicinal value and were illegal to prescribe. This classification blocked any formal use in the NHS or wider UK healthcare system.

However, in November 2018, the UK government rescheduled cannabis-based products for medicinal use to Schedule 2 under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations. In simple terms, this legalized the prescription of cannabis-derived medicines by specialist doctors under certain conditions. Patients stopped living in a legal grey zone when it came to prescribed cannabis medicines.

- **What this rescheduling did:** Allowed specialist doctors to prescribe certain cannabis-based products legally.
- **What it didn't do:** Automatically mean NHS funding or wide availability, nor permission for GPs to prescribe.

Impact on MS Spasticity Treatment

This change was especially significant for treating MS-related spasticity, where oral THC:CBD sprays became a licensed option in the UK. Doctors could legally prescribe these sprays to help ease symptoms when other treatments failed.

Legal Prescribing vs NHS Funding: What's the Difference?

After 2018, while prescribing the four-week THC:CBD spray trial became legal for specialist doctors, the big catch was the question of NHS funding and patient access.

Legal prescribing simply means a specialist can write a prescription without breaking the law. But **NHS funding** means the treatment is approved as cost-effective and is paid for from NHS budgets.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and NHS England currently provide guidance that is cautious about routinely funding cannabis-based medicines, including THC:CBD sprays, given limited, mixed evidence of effectiveness and high costs.



- Many specialist centres offer a four-week trial under a “clinical trial” or “evaluation” system to assess patient response before ongoing prescribing decisions.
- In most cases, unless part of an approved NHS pathway, continuing treatment beyond that initial trial may need to be privately funded.

It’s important to know that **the legality of prescribing does not guarantee NHS funding or easy access.**

Specialist-Only Prescribing Rules

Because of the complexity and controlled nature of cannabis-based medicines, prescribing is restricted to certain specialist doctors in the UK, often neurologists or pain consultants. General Practitioners (GPs) are not authorised to initiate or prescribe THC:CBD sprays.

This restriction stems from the need to carefully evaluate patients to identify those who might benefit, monitoring side effects, and managing the controlled logistics due to the drug’s legal status.

For patients, this means:

1. You’ll typically need a specialist referral to even get considered for a THC:CBD spray trial.
2. The prescribing and monitoring stay within those specialist clinics.
3. Once the four-week trial ends, specialists review whether it’s helping enough to justify continuation.

Unlicensed Cannabis-Based Medicines and NHS Caution

Outside licensed THC:CBD sprays [Have a peek at this website](#) like *Sativex*®, many cannabis-based products remain unlicensed or “specials.” While some patients may seek these, the NHS remains cautious about routinely prescribing or funding unlicensed cannabis medicines due to:

- Lack of robust clinical trial data supporting consistent benefit.
- Variation in product quality, dosing, and contents.
- Legal scrutiny and safety profiling concerns.

The principle within NHS guidelines is clear: doctors can prescribe unlicensed medicines only when there is a special clinical need and no licensed alternative. Consequently, unlicensed cannabis products are rarely routinely provided by the NHS.

What a Four-Week THC:CBD Spray Trial Involves

In practice, a four-week trial is a closely monitored period during which a specialist prescribes the spray to assess its effectiveness in reducing MS spasticity symptoms and improving quality of life.

What patients can expect:

1. **Initial specialist consultation:** Neurologist or MS specialist assesses your symptoms and suitability.
2. **Trial initiation:** Prescribed the spray under supervision; clear instructions on dosage and use.
3. **Monitoring:** Regular follow-up visits or calls to check symptom improvement, side effects, and overall experience.
4. **Review after 4 weeks:** Specialist decides if benefits outweigh any risks or side effects.
5. **Next steps:** If effective, discussion of long-term access options; if not, stopping the treatment.

It's worth noting that if the trial is NHS-funded, the costs will be covered. Otherwise, patients may face private treatment fees.

Helpful Resources

- medicalcannabis.co.uk — A UK-focused directory and comparison site for clinics offering medicinal cannabis consultations and treatment pathways.
- releaf.co.uk — Offers clear explanations about cannabis medicines, legalities, and patient rights.

Pricing Example: What Does a Trial Cost?

As of now, **no specific prices were stated in publicly available NHS or clinic materials about the cost of a four-week THC:CBD spray trial.** If a price is mentioned in future sources, we will quote it exactly and attribute it properly.

Private clinics may charge for initial consultations and ongoing prescriptions, sometimes bundled into a package including the medication itself, but patient experiences vary widely. Transparency remains an issue in the private cannabis prescribing market.

Key Takeaways for MS Patients in the UK

- **A four-week THC:CBD spray trial is a specialist-prescribed, legal, but cautiously supported option for MS spasticity.**
- **Since 2018's rescheduling, it is legal to prescribe but not guaranteed on the NHS; access often requires meeting specific criteria.**
- **GPs cannot initiate or prescribe THC:CBD sprays; it must be through specialist doctors.**
- **NHS funding decisions are made based on cost-effectiveness and evidence — currently cautious with cannabis-based meds.**
- **Private routes are available but come with significant variabilities in cost and quality.**

If you are considering this treatment, the best first step is to speak with your MS specialist. They can give guidance tailored to your health circumstances and NHS or private access options.

And remember: knowing the difference between legal prescribing, NHS funding, and private availability is crucial to navigate your treatment journey effectively.

