

## Increasing use by elders of CBD for anxiety

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Grace was living in her own home with help from caregivers, but was experiencing anxiety and agitation due to dementia. Her doctor had prescribed anti-anxiety medicine, but it only seemed to increase her falls. The family decided to go another route and looked into accessing the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program. The Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP) is a state registry program within the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). Check out this website for all the important information you would need to know to become a legal patient of this system: [bit.ly/2pIKxu2](http://bit.ly/2pIKxu2).

Her provider suggested she use a marijuana tincture for her agitation. Almost immediately after using this product, which contained a compound known as CBD or cannabidiol, Grace would settle down and relax. This did not make her feel “stoned,” as the other component, THC, was only present in a very tiny amount. Since this worked so well, they next tried a tincture to help her sleep at night. And, once again, she had a positive response. So, now sleeping better, and having something to help if her anxiety got activated, her caregivers noticed a big change in the quality of her life.

Something to know right off the bat is this: If you are living in a facility that accepts Medicare or Medicaid, you cannot use marijuana in any form, even though it’s legal in Oregon. That’s due to the federal laws governing the use of this product. You can, however, purchase over-the-counter CBD tinctures and oils, since they come from the hemp plant and contain no THC. The Ashland Food Co-Op ([ashlandfood.coop/store](http://ashlandfood.coop/store)) carries them. Some people report good results from these products as well.

There is a legal process to getting a medical marijuana card. Here are the names of two local resources that are very helpful, if you are considering how these plant medicines might be supportive to you. Both can assist you to find out if you qualify for this program.

One is Ashland Alternative Health: 180 Clear Creek Drive #103, Ashland (541-488-220, [www.ashlandalthhealth.com](http://www.ashlandalthhealth.com)). From the website: Ashland Alternative Health's team of physicians and professional staff will successfully guide you through the OMMP process of acquiring an Oregon Medical Marijuana Card.

Another is Willow Mountain Medicine: Dr. Judy Emanuel ([willowmountainmedical.com](http://willowmountainmedical.com); 541-708-0200). From the website: If you are a mid-lifer or senior (50+), and have a qualifying medical condition, medical marijuana may help you. Dr. Emanuel will also make a home visit if the person is not well enough to come to her office.

What will all this cost? Both facilities' fees range from \$135-\$175. There are also additional fees paid to the state of Oregon to process this application. These fees range from \$20-\$200, depending on income. This does not include the cost of purchasing the medical marijuana from one of several dispensaries in Ashland.

There is a lot of talk about how this product helps older adults to maintain a better quality of life. This is not intended to substitute for medical advice, though. Here's some information edited from [seniordirectory.com](http://seniordirectory.com):

- There are marijuana strains without “the high.” CBD is tremendous for inflammation, eases pain, stimulates bone growth, suppresses muscular spasms, reduces anxiety and increases mental focus.
- There are ways to use marijuana other than smoking it: liquid extracts, infused honey, candies, baked goods and other products.
- Marijuana-infused ointments can be very effective in alleviating arthritis and neuropathy pain, sore joints and muscles, and back pain.

Seniors are the fastest growing population of new medical marijuana users. From the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute from the University of Washington, comes this info:

Data from the annual National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), from 2002-2014, shows the proportion of adults aged 50 to 64 who reported marijuana use in the past year more than tripled from 2.9 percent to 9.0 percent. Among adults aged 65 or older, the proportion increased more than tenfold, from 0.2 percent to 2.1 percent.

This website ([learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/factsheets/olderadults.htm](http://learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/factsheets/olderadults.htm)) also addresses concerns about marijuana use by older adults. According to the Mayo Clinic, marijuana may interact with several medications that are commonly prescribed to older adults. It's recommended that they start by talking with their primary health care providers before using this product.

Making a decision to access legal medical marijuana is a decision best made after considering all the options. But for many older adults, this is “just what the doctor ordered” for pain relief of all types.