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Here's what kills me: when prescribed cannabis flower is taken in the UK, it's always vaporised — never smoked. This is no accident. Temperature plays a crucial role in determining the effects of vaporised cannabis, affecting which active compounds you inhale, how strong the vapor is, and even the flavor you experience. Understanding how heat changes the balance between cannabinoids, terpenes, and harmful by-products can help patients get the most from their treatment while minimising risks. Let's break it down without jargon.



## How UK Prescribed Cannabis is Consumed: Vaporisation, Not Smoking

In the UK, cannabis prescribed on the NHS or private prescription is dispensed as dried flower, but smoking it is not [thelondoneconomic.com](https://www.thelondoneconomic.com) recommended—or legal as a method of administration. Instead, patients use **vaporisers**, which gently heat the flower to produce a breathable vapor without combustion.

- **Vaporisation** means heating cannabis to a point where cannabinoids and aromatic oils (terpenes) evaporate, but the plant material doesn't burn.
- **Smoking**

Pharmacies and healthcare professionals regulated by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) ensure that prescribed cannabis is dispensed with advice for vaporisation, not smoking, to maximise safety and therapeutic outcomes.

## Combustion By-Products vs Vaporisation: Why It Matters

Burning plant material creates a cocktail of harmful chemicals:

- Tar, carbon monoxide, and other carcinogens
- Unpredictable doses of cannabinoids because the flame destroys some active compounds
- Harsh smoke that irritates lungs and throat

By contrast, vaporising cannabis at controlled temperatures avoids these problems:

- Gentle heating releases cannabinoids and terpenes without creating smoke or ash
- Cleaner vapor means less respiratory irritation and more consistent dosing
- Different temperatures allow selective extraction of compounds based on their boiling points

## How Temperature Controls the Effect of the Same Cannabis Flower

Different active compounds in cannabis vaporise at different temperatures. By changing the vaporiser's temperature, you influence which compounds you inhale and in what ratios.



### Lower Temperature = Lighter Vapor, More Terpenes

Setting your device to a lower temperature (typically around 160–180°C, or 320–356°F) produces a thinner, lighter vapor that contains mainly terpenes and some cannabinoids.

- **Terpenes** are aromatic oils that give cannabis its distinctive smell and taste. They also modulate effects — some are calming (like myrcene), others uplifting (like limonene).
- Lower temps preserve more terpenes because these volatile oils evaporate at lower temperatures than cannabinoids and are destroyed by high heat.
- This lighter vapor is easier on lungs and throat, with nuanced flavor.

### Higher Temperature = Denser Vapor, More Cannabinoids

Increasing the temperature (around 190–220°C, or 374–428°F) releases more cannabinoids like THC and CBD, resulting in thicker, denser vapor and stronger effects.

- Cannabinoids have higher boiling points than terpenes — for example, THC vaporises around 157°C (315°F) while CBD vaporises near 180°C (356°F).
- Higher temp releases more cannabinoids but also “burns off” some of the delicate terpenes, changing the flavor and aroma.
- Too high a temperature risks combustion if it exceeds 230°C, which brings back harmful smoke risks.

**Summary Table: Temperature vs Vapor\*\***

| Temperature Range     | Compounds Released                           | Vapor Characteristics                                  | Typical Effects                                          |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 160–180°C (320–356°F) | Mostly terpenes; some cannabinoids           | Light, thinner vapor; aromatic; less throat irritation | Milder, nuanced effects; more aroma; smoother inhalation |
| 190–220°C (374–428°F) | More cannabinoids (THC, CBD); fewer terpenes | Denser, thicker vapor; stronger taste but less aroma   | Stronger effects; quicker onset; more intense            |
| Above 230°C (446°F)   | Risk of combustion; harmful by-products      | Smoke, irritant, unpleasant taste                      | Potential lung damage; inconsistent dosing               |

## The Vaporiser Device As Part of Treatment

The device you use isn't just a gadget — it's part of your medicine. Vaporiser precision and design affect dosing consistency and safety.

- **Temperature Control:** Accurate digital controls let patients fine-tune temperature to target specific cannabinoids or terpenes.
- **Heating Method:** Conduction (direct contact) vs convection (hot air) impacts how evenly flower heats, affecting vapor quality.
- **Device Quality:** Cheaper devices may have uneven heating causing partial combustion or inconsistent doses.
- Pharmacists in the UK often recommend medically approved vaporisers to ensure reproducible effects and safer inhalation.

## Pharmacy and GPhC Regulation Around Prescribed Cannabis

The world of cannabis prescriptions in the UK is regulated tightly:

- **Pharmacists**
- **Patient Safety:** Pharmacists provide instructions emphasizing vaporiser use at appropriate temperatures—not smoking—to avoid harm.
- **Quality Assurance:** Dispensed cannabis must meet quality specs, ensuring consistent cannabinoid levels batch-to-batch.
- **Device Advice:** Part of the regulated service is recommending or explaining how to use devices that maintain dosage consistency and temperature control.

## Why This Matters for Patients

Understanding how temperature changes cannabis vapor—from lighter, terpene-rich vapors to denser cannabinoid-packed clouds—means patients can:

1. Tailor effects depending on symptom relief needed (e.g., relaxation vs pain relief)
2. Avoid inhaling harmful smoke and maximize safety
3. Optimise the therapeutic benefits of their prescribed product
4. Use devices properly as intended—getting consistent doses keeps treatment reliable

## In Summary

Temperature controls the effect of the very same cannabis flower by changing which compounds vaporise and how much vapor you inhale. Lower temperatures give you lighter vapor with more flavor and subtle effects thanks

to terpenes, while higher temperatures release more cannabinoids for stronger effects but less aroma. UK prescribed cannabis is always vaporised, not smoked, under pharmacy and GPhC regulation to protect patient safety and dosing consistency. Your vaporiser device isn't just a container—it's a medicine delivery tool that must be used thoughtfully.

So if you're a patient with a cannabis flower prescription, treat your vaporiser temperature like your prescription dose—because it really is a vital part of your treatment's success.

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