

Medical Cannabis Patient Information Sheet

The access process

There are 2 easy steps as follows:

1. **REGISTER:** Register at reception or by phone and we will phone you to establish your eligibility under the regulations and assist you to get a referral from your existing doctor.
2. **REFERRAL:** If your usual doctor will not prescribe medical cannabis for you, then a referral letter from your doctor is required.

When the above steps have been completed, we can book an appointment for you to see the prescribing doctor in our clinic.

Approval for your case should be received from the TGA approximately 10 days after your consultation. Once approval has been received, you will be able to pick up your prescription for the pharmacy, or we can deliver the prescription to our pharmacy who will contact you by phone.

TALK TO YOUR GP

The first thing you will need to do is talk to your regular GP about using Medical Cannabis as a treatment. If the condition is new, your GP is likely to recommend that you try other conventional treatments first. Before prescribing Medicinal Cannabis, the doctor will assess each patient to decide if the treatment is appropriate for their condition and individual circumstances. The doctor will also consider the patient's current medications and any other things that may interact with Medicinal Cannabis prescription.

ACCESS

Access to Medical Cannabis is generally via the Federal Special Access Scheme B (SAS B). Approval or authorisation for patients to access Medicinal Cannabis is granted on a case by case basis, and governed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). In order to access medicinal cannabis, the TGA will consider any chronic condition that has lasted 3 months or more and has not responded to conventional treatments / medications.

CONSENT

You will need to give informed consent and sign that you will not drive a vehicle or operate heavy machinery if the medicinal cannabis contains Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

COST

The cost depends on the cannabinoids in the product; the amount required by the patient; the source; shipping expenses; custom and dispensing fees.

PBS

Medicinal Cannabis is not on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) so patients need to pay the costs of purchasing the product. Currently there is no government subsidy nor does the government regulate the prices for supply of approved products.

HEALTH FUNDS

Some patients have been refunded for the cost of the medicine on their health fund. Please check with your own health fund.

* The general estimate for an average Chronic Pain patient is to spend between \$4 and \$10 per day on Medical Cannabis (Med Can).

COST OF MEDICINAL CANNABIS CONSULTS

Your initial medical cannabis consultation will take up to an hour to complete the paperwork. Your own doctor can charge \$150 - \$400 for this consultation. This is subsidised by Medicare (\$71).

Subsequent consultations are \$40 - \$80 and are subsidised by Medicare (\$37). You will need to have follow-up consultations with your doctor to get subsequent monthly prescriptions. Pharmacies charge a fee to dispense the product. If you decide to change your Med Can product or add an additional product, the doctor will need to apply to the TGA again. For each new product, your doctor must make another TGA application on your behalf. Your doctor may charge you a consult fee for their time.

TELEHEALTH COSTS

Telehealth consultations are \$199 for the initial consultation which includes the application to the TGA, the prescription and the pharmacy dispensing. Follow up consults and repeat prescriptions cost \$59. Approval renewals or change of product consultations are \$99. Please note that Telehealth consultations will not be eligible for a Medicare rebate unless you live in a remote area without any access to a prescribing doctor. In order to book a Telehealth consult with the clinic, you will require a referral from your own doctor.

CONSULTATION	FULL COST	MEDICARE REBATE	TELEHEALTH COST	MEDICARE REBATE
APPLICATION CONSULTATION	\$200.00	\$71.00	\$199.00	Only available in remote areas with no prescribing doctor
REVIEW/ REPEAT PRESCRIPTION	\$70.00	\$37.00	\$59.00	
APPROVAL RENEWAL	\$170.00	\$71.00	\$99.00	

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR CONSULTATION

You will need to bring the following:

1. A referral letter from your regular doctor
2. A copy of your relevant medical history / other relevant documentation relating to your condition/s
3. A list of your current medications, or bring them in a bag to your consult

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Before your consultation, it is a good idea to research THC and CBD so that you are familiar with the effects and possible side effects of these cannabinoids (cannabis components). There is a section below which provides an overview of these.

PRODUCTS

Medical Cannabis comes in a variety of forms with varying combinations of cannabinoids (ie THC / CBD):

- Flower / bud
- Oils
- Liquid Capsules
- Oro-mucosal spray
- Patches
- Gels

ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION

- Orally: spray, oils, capsules or tablets
- Inhaled via vaporisation: using a vaporiser approved by the TGA as a medical device or sourced by the patient
- Skin: patches, topical gel or topical cream

MEDICINAL CANNABIS DOSING

There are 2 types of dosing:

- Regular dosing for control of a consistent symptom / condition
- As required dosing for an intermittent symptom / condition

In both cases, patients should try to use the minimal effective dose. This is achieved by starting at a low dose as instructed by your doctor, and gradually increasing your dose until you either:

- have symptom / condition relief;
- you have a side effect or
- you reach the maximum dose prescribed by your doctor.

If a side effect occurs, please contact your prescribing doctor and decrease the next dose. Most regular dosing is divided into twice daily intervals, but some patients find more regular intervals i.e. 4 times per day, better at controlling their symptom / condition. An example for a slowly increasing dose with an oil dropper would be 1 drop twice a day, increased by 1 drop every second day, to a maximum of 10 drops twice a day. This is a titrating dose.

RESTRICTIONS

Patients will not be approved to smoke cannabis as this exposes them to combusted cannabis material. Vaporisation heats the cannabis to a lower temperature which releases heated cannabinoids at a temperature below combustion. Doctors seeking approval to use a specific product will need to provide evidence of its safety and efficacy for the condition or symptom being treated as part of their clinical justification to the TGA.

DRIVING

THC is the main psychoactive component of some cannabis. Some Medicinal Cannabis products have no THC and thus are non-psychoactive. Research has shown that THC use has an effect on a person's ability to drive. Unlike alcohol, there is currently no specific concentration of THC that authorities can use as an indicator of impairment. **It is illegal for any patient being treated with medicinal cannabis containing THC to drive while undergoing treatment.**

CBD and THC

Cannabinoids are naturally occurring compounds found in the Cannabis sativa plant. Of over 480 different compounds present in the plant, only around 66 are termed cannabinoids.

The cannabinoids are most abundant in the female flower head which is used in the manufacture of medicinal cannabis products. The most well-known among these compounds is THC, the main psychoactive ingredient in cannabis.

The main cannabinoids in cannabis are THC and CBD. THC is the most well-known due to its psychoactive properties and therefore its prevalence within the black market which has been specifically cultivated to get its user 'high'. THC may also be responsible for some of

the medicinal effects of cannabis, such as reduction of nausea, vomiting, pain, and muscle spasms as well as improvements in sleep and appetite.

CBD has been found to reduce the 'high' and may be effective for seizures, pain and may also reduce anxiety. CBD causes no 'high' feeling and patients can drive when using CBD.

Different cannabis strains contain different ratios of THC to CBD. Medicinal Cannabis with THC is considered a controlled drug under Schedule 8 (S8) of the Poisons Standard. From 1 June 2015, CBD has been included under Schedule 4 (S4) Prescriptions Only Medicine of the Poisons Standard when preparations for therapeutic use contain 2% or less of other cannabinoids found in cannabis.

This document is a guide only.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak with your prescribing doctor.