



Medicinal Cannabis: Quick Guide for prescribers

Most medicinal cannabis products are Schedule 8 (S8) medicines, also known as controlled drugs. Products which contain cannabidiol only are classified as Schedule 4 (S4) medicines, also termed prescription only medicines.

With the exception of Sativex[®], medicinal cannabis products are not Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) registered therapeutic goods. This means these products have not been fully assessed for safety and efficacy by the national regulator. It also means TGA approval or notification processes must be completed as part of prescribing these products. TGA requirements apply to all unregistered therapeutic goods, regardless of whether they are S4 or S8 products.

Who can prescribe medicinal cannabis products?

All medical practitioners in Western Australia (WA) can prescribe medicinal cannabis products. For most patients, a general practitioner (GP) can initiate treatment. Specialist endorsement is required before a GP can prescribe medicinal cannabis for a person with drug dependency (current or history) or products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) for children and young people.

As with a number of other S8 medicines, approval to prescribe is required for each individual patient. State approval is not required for cannabidiol only products.

Clinical decisions about whether treatment with a medicinal cannabis product is suitable for a particular patient remains a matter for the treating medical practitioner.

Applying for approval to prescribe

A [single application process](#) is available to obtain approval from both the Commonwealth and the WA Department of Health. Decisions are advised by email within two working days, provided all required information has been provided.

Clinical efficacy and adverse effects

Comprehensive guidance on clinical indications, evidence of efficacy, dosing and adverse effects is [available from the TGA](#).

Product availability and quality

Practitioners can obtain information about available products, formulations, strengths and dosing from manufacturers and importers. A [list of suppliers](#) is available from the Commonwealth Office of Drug Control (ODC).

Medicinal cannabis products supplied in Australia must meet a [specific TGA manufacturing quality standard](#) (known as TGO 93). This standard is not about clinical effectiveness or risk of adverse events.

Dispensing

Prescriptions for medicinal cannabis products can be dispensed at any pharmacy in Western Australia. As with all prescriptions for Schedule 8 medicines, pharmacists may contact the prescriber to verify the prescription is genuine.

Costs

Prescribers are encouraged to contact suppliers directly for information on product prices.

Medicinal cannabis products are not Commonwealth or State funded medicines. Product prices are set by manufacturers and importers and are not regulated by Government.

Other considerations

Prescribers are encouraged to discuss the risks and current legal status of driving whilst taking a cannabis-based product with all patients. Drug driving laws in WA mean detection of THC in saliva during roadside testing can result in a penalty regardless of the source of the THC.

It is strongly recommended that prescribers consider obtaining informed patient consent to treatment. A [sample consent document](#) is available on the Department of Health website.

Further information

Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch

Phone: 9222 4424 (Prescriber information service), 9222 6883 (Other enquiries)

Email: MPRB@health.wa.gov.au

Mail: PO Box 8172, Perth Business Centre WA 6849

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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