

Access to medicinal cannabis in Victoria

Information for medical professionals

How do I decide whether treatment with a medicinal cannabis product is appropriate?

Although high-level evidence on the use of medicinal cannabis products has been limited to date, it is rapidly evolving.

The Commonwealth Department of Health, in conjunction with state and territory governments, has helped coordinate the development of new clinical guidance documents for prescribers of medicinal cannabis products.

An overview document and patient information document are also available.

To view and download the guidelines please follow the link <<https://www.tga.gov.au/access-medical-cannabis-products>>

In determining whether use of medicinal cannabis products is appropriate, it is the responsibility of the treating medical practitioner to assess the available efficacy and safety data, weighing this information against the seriousness of the patient's medical condition

What medicinal cannabis products are available?

There is currently one medicinal cannabis product approved for use in Australia and registered on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods <<https://www.tga.gov.au/australian-register-therapeutic-goods>>. That product is Nabiximols (Sativex®), approved for the indication of treatment for symptom improvement in patients with moderate to severe spasticity due to multiple sclerosis (MS) who have not responded adequately to other anti-spasticity medication and who demonstrate clinically significant improvement in spasticity related symptoms during an initial trial of therapy.

If prescribing Nabiximols, a Schedule 8 treatment permit from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services will be required. More information can be found here:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/treatment-approvals/schedule-8-permits-and-notifications>

There are currently no locally produced legal medicinal cannabis products available in Australia. However, you can apply to access imported medicinal cannabis products via the Special Access Scheme (SAS), which is administered by the TGA. <<https://www.tga.gov.au/form/special-access-scheme>>

The Office of Drug Control (ODC) publishes an [updated list of importers and manufacturers](#) of medicinal cannabis products on its website at <<https://www.odc.gov.au/importers-and-manufacturers-medicinal-cannabis-products>> to assist in identifying products currently available in Australia. It is important to note that these products can currently only be accessed via SAS Category B, by an Authorised Prescriber, or as part of a clinical trial.

It is possible to prescribe a medicinal cannabis product not already in Australia; however, appropriate import permits issued by the ODC will also be required. More information on personal importation of products is available on the [TGA website](#) at <<https://www.tga.gov.au/access-medical-cannabis-products-steps-using-access-schemes>>.

How do I prescribe medicinal cannabis?

You will need to confirm two points prior to progressing applications for medicinal cannabis access (see also Figure 1):

1. How is the intended drug scheduled within the Poisons Standard (SUSMP)?
2. Does your patient qualify as an SAS Category A or Category B patient?

Access to medicinal cannabis products is the same as for any un-approved drug – via the TGA's SAS or Authorised Prescriber Scheme. Patients may also be

able to access medicinal cannabis products as part of registered clinical trials.

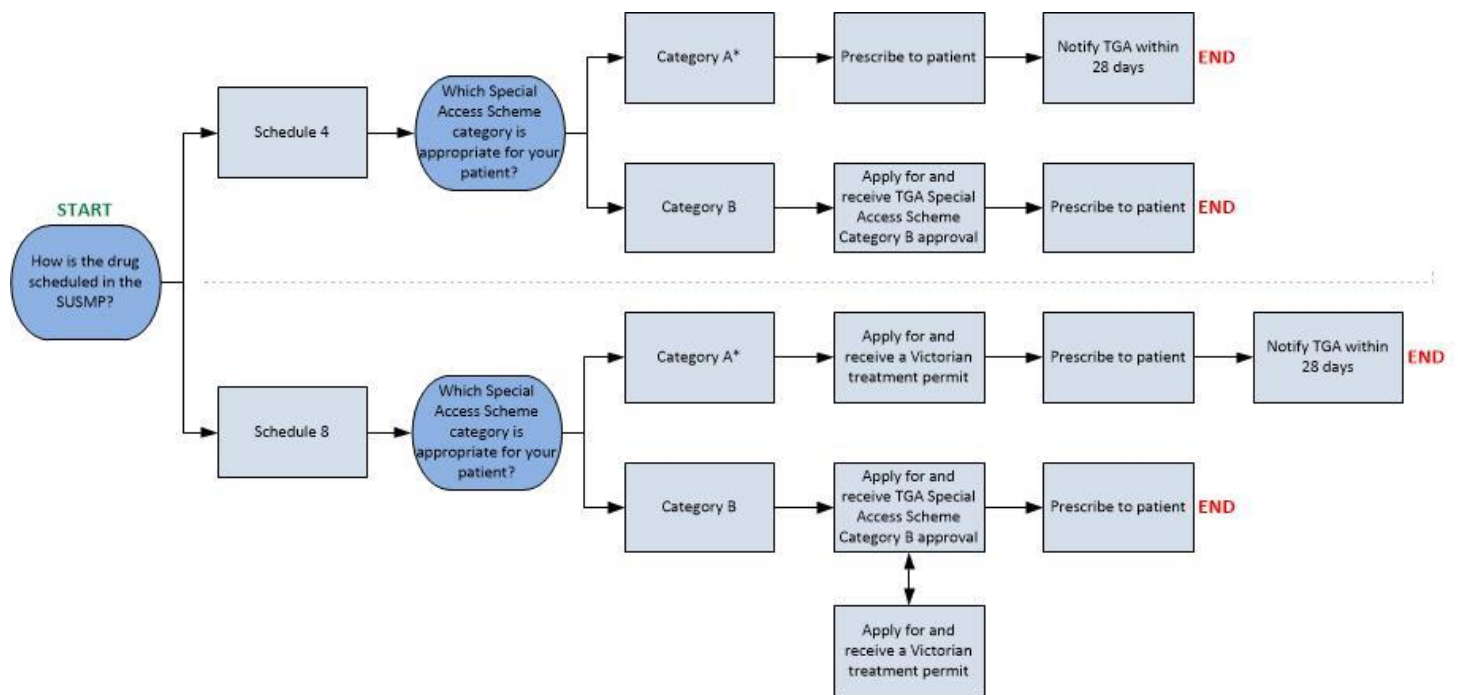
Depending on the drug sought, it may also be necessary to apply for a treatment permit under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*.

How much does medicinal cannabis cost?

There are currently no medicinal cannabis products subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Costs will vary depending upon products and dosages suitable for your patient's medical condition. As these products are not subsidised, the full cost must be funded by the patient. Information regarding the cost of products may be obtained from the wholesaler listed on the ODC website.

The Victorian government has a compassionate access scheme that funds product for a limited number of children with severe intractable epilepsy. Paediatric neurologists seeking further information about this scheme should contact the Office of Medicinal Cannabis.

Figure 1: Approval process for medicinal cannabis in Victoria



*NOTE: Products available from wholesalers within Australia are not available for supply via SAS Cat. A

Useful links

Office of Medicinal Cannabis Victoria

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/medicinal-cannabis>

Therapeutic Goods Administration – Medicinal cannabis

<https://www.tga.gov.au/access-medicinal-cannabis-products>

Office of Drug Control

<https://www.odc.gov.au/importers-and-manufacturers-medicinal-cannabis-products>

Drugs and Poisons Regulation – Treatment permits

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/medical-practitioners-medicines-control/legislation-permits>

National Academies of Science

<http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2017/health-effects-of-cannabis-and-cannabinoids.aspx>

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone (03) 9096 7768 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email <medicinal.cannabis@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/medicinal-cannabis>