

Fact Sheet

Medicinal cannabis – information for General Practitioners (GPs)

Since 2016, cannabis for medical use is regulated as a medicine in Australia, including South Australia.

To provide support for patients wishing to access this treatment and clarity for health professionals, the South Australian patient access pathway was introduced in April 2017. Under the pathway, legal requirements for medicinal cannabis are aligned with those of other medicines in the same Schedule. For Schedule 8 medicinal cannabis products, this includes exemptions from state approval apply for patients aged 70 or older and Notified Palliative Care Patients. Schedule 4 cannabidiol (CBD) medicines do not require a state approval in South Australia.

Product availability

Currently in Australia there is only one approved (registered for use on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods) medicinal cannabis medicine, nabiximols (Sativex®). Sativex is approved for symptom improvement in multiple sclerosis related spasticity. Being a registered medicine, there is approved Product Information to support medical practitioners in making treatment decisions about its use.

There are many unregistered medicinal cannabis products available in Australia via licensed importers and suppliers. The Commonwealth [Office of Drug Control](#) (ODC) publishes details of approved suppliers and contact details on its [website](#) and medical practitioners can contact suppliers directly for information about their products.

Clinical information

There is a range of information and clinical resources to support patients and health professionals interested in learning about medicinal cannabis available through online sources.

The [SA Health website](#) provides information and resources for health professionals and consumers including:

- > Legal requirements for prescribing and information about exemptions
- > How to apply for approval to prescribe a product
- > [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- > Factsheets
- > Links to other relevant information and contacts

The [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\)](#) has comprehensive information on its website about medicinal cannabis. This includes a series of [guidance documents](#) about use in:

- > Multiple sclerosis
- > Palliative care
- > Epilepsy in paediatric and young adults
- > Prevention or management of nausea and vomiting
- > Chronic non-cancer pain
- > Consumer information



The TGA also has a [blog](#) about medicinal cannabis covering the regulatory framework, clinical evidence and patient access, as well as extensive information about access to [medicinal cannabis products](#) including FAQs, printable resources and information for patients.

The [Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence \(ACRE\)](#) is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and provides comprehensive information, [publications](#) and [resources](#).

ACRE has developed a series of [prescribing guidance documents](#) in collaboration with NSW Health for the following conditions:

- > Anorexia Cachexia in Advanced Cancer
- > Chemotherapy-Induced Nausea and Vomiting (CINV)
- > Nausea in Palliative Care
- > Dementia
- > Non-Cancer Pain
- > Spasticity

Some useful resources have also come out of the United Kingdom, including the [UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\) guideline](#) covering prescribing of cannabis based medicines published in November 2019, following comprehensive evaluation of their clinical and cost-effectiveness.

The [NHS England](#) also published a [review](#) in August 2019 aimed at assessing the barriers to prescribing medicinal cannabis with a main focus on severe treatment-resistant epilepsy.

Supporting this extensive online information, advice about medicines is available through the [SA Pharmacy Medicines Information Service](#) for health practitioners, patients and members of the public on (08) 8161 7555 during business hours.

Professional development and online learning for GPs

The [Australian Medical Association](#) (AMA) is hosting Continuous Professional Development (CPD) modules on the Special Access Scheme (SAS) and Authorised Prescriber (AP) scheme. These modules also include information on access to medicinal cannabis and are linked on the [TGA website](#).

The [Royal College of General Practitioners \(RACGP\)](#) has a free [webinar](#) series available on its website about prescribing medicinal cannabis products in general practice. This is presented by NSW Health clinicians covering current evidence and availability and prescribing in general practice.

For more information
Medicines and Technology Programs
Department for Health and Wellbeing
SA Health

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/medicinalcannabis

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