

Medicinal Cannabis – for patients

The ACT Medicinal Cannabis Scheme aims to provide patients with safe and legal access to high quality medicinal cannabis products in appropriate circumstances.

The term medicinal cannabis refers to cannabis that is intended for therapeutic use and is regulated as a prescription pharmaceutical formulation. This differs from raw botanical cannabis that is consumed or smoked for recreational or medical purposes.

Certain medicinal cannabis formulations may be legally prescribed in the ACT.

Most medicinal cannabis formulations in Australia are unapproved therapeutic goods, which means they have not been assessed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for safety, quality or effectiveness and are not included on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG). Prescribers wishing to access unapproved medicinal cannabis products for their patients may apply to the TGA through the Special Access Scheme (SAS) or Authorised Prescriber Scheme.

Some medicinal cannabis products are included on the ARTG and therefore approved for use in Australia, for example nabiximols (Sativex®).

Medicinal cannabis products may be available as either schedule 8 (controlled), schedule 4 (prescription only) and schedule 3 (pharmacist only) medicines, depending on the type and concentration of active ingredient(s) they contain.

All other forms of cannabis cannot be prescribed for medicinal use.

Medicinal cannabis preparations that contain THC (tetrahydrocannabinol – the main psychoactive substance in cannabis) may cause a positive roadside drug test. It is currently an offence to drive with THC in a person's oral fluid or blood. There is no legislative dispensation or defence for the use of medicinal cannabis which leads to a positive roadside drug test.

How can I access medicinal cannabis in the ACT?

1. If you are a patient (or their carer), you should speak with your health practitioner about whether medicinal cannabis is suitable for your condition. Your General Practitioner will be able to prescribe medicinal cannabis for you without further specialist support if they believe you are suitable for treatment.
2. If your health practitioner believes it may be effective, they will need to seek approvals to prescribe medicinal cannabis through the TGA's single online application form, located on the TGA's website.
3. Once approved, you may receive a prescription to take to your pharmacy or receive direct supply from your prescriber.



What medical conditions may be approved for treatment?

The TGA will assess each application from a prescriber for the medical condition requested. There are no restrictions imposed by the TGA on the medical condition for which a prescriber may apply. ACT Health does not assess applications based on the medical condition being treated.

What about children?

The ACT Medicinal Cannabis scheme enables prescribing for children for appropriate medical conditions.

Interstate prescriptions

If you have a prescription for medicinal cannabis written in another state or territory that is a schedule 8 (controlled) medicine, your prescriber may need to obtain ACT Chief Health Officer approval to enable your prescription to be dispensed at an ACT pharmacy. Please ask your prescriber obtain a separate ACT approval if you wish to have your prescription dispensed in the ACT. Further information for interstate prescribers may be found on the ACT Health website details below.

Further Information

For further information, please visit www.health.act.gov.au/pss or contact the Pharmaceutical Services Section of the Health Protection Service on (02) 5124 9208 or via hps@act.gov.au.

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

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