

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

### THE RIGHT DOSE

To find the right dose of medicinal cannabis, follow the **'start low & go slow'** approach.

Begin with a low dosage and gradually increase it until you find the right amount for your needs. Work with your doctor and or pharmacist through this process. Remember that the effects of medicinal cannabis can be delayed by 30-90 minutes. Most products contain different ratios of CBD or THC, and/or they contain the 'full spectrum' of the cannabis plant including terpenes. If you have never trialled medicinal cannabis before it's likely you may only need a fraction of the regular starting dose of a regular cannabis user. Medicinal cannabis can take between 4-12 weeks until its full benefits can be evaluated.

#### EXIT

#### STRATEGY

When starting a new treatment or therapy its important to discuss an exit strategy for situations where it is not helping to manage the symptoms or the goals of treatment are not reached.



### DIFFERENT FORMS

Medicinal cannabis comes in various forms. Oral forms (oils, gummies, capsules) take 60-180 minutes to take effect and work for 6-8 hours. Given the slower onset and longer duration, it is expected that taking medicinal cannabis products orally would be more useful for medical conditions or symptoms where control over longer periods of time is sought - similar to the use of slow-release medications.

Inhaled forms (dried flowers, vape cards) take effect in a quick 10-15 minutes but only work for 2-4 hours. Smoking medicinal cannabis can cause lung harm and isn't recommended. It's safer to use a vaporiser for inhalation. Given the rapid onset of action, vaporising cannabis products is best for symptoms or conditions where rapid relief is required. No vaporisers are currently registered in Australia. If vaporised cannabis is to be used it is recommended that those which have been studied in a research setting and found to be safe and feasible are chosen for use, such as Volcano Medic and Mighty Medic.

### COST

Medicinal cannabis is not currently subsidised through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). However, alternative schemes exist that can make it more affordable, such as concession schemes and funding options for DVA card holders. The cost of medicinal cannabis depends on the type and quantity. Oils start from around \$59, though can cost much more, and a bottle typically lasts 1 to 2 months with daily use. Cannabis flowers range from \$99 to \$200 for 10 to 15 grams. Some private health insurance providers offer extras coverage that allows patients to reclaim a portion of the cost.

# Medicinal Cannabis

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### DRIVING

Whether you can drive while using medicinal cannabis depends on the type you take. It is legal to drive when using pure CBD products. However, this is not true of THC products, as driving with any THC in your system is currently illegal. How long THC remains in your system depends on the individual and the method of consumption. Be aware that THC can be detected many days after you last took it. Talk to your doctor to develop a plan that suits your driving needs.

### TRAVELLING



You can bring legally prescribed medicinal cannabis with you to all states and territories in Australia. Remember to keep it in its original container with the pharmacy label visible. It's also a good idea to ask your doctor for a letter that proves you are prescribed medicinal cannabis.

When travelling overseas, check the laws of the country you are visiting and any layovers you may have. The legality of medicinal cannabis varies significantly by country.

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**18%** of Australians with chronic pain self-medicate with **non-medical cannabis**

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### MEDICINAL VS NON-MEDICINAL

Non-medical or recreational use of cannabis refers to the use of cannabis consumption without a prescription from a registered health professional and is illegal in Australia. Using non-medical cannabis poses risks such as potential exposure to harmful chemicals, mould, and toxins. You won't know the specific strain or its effects, so it's difficult to consistently find a product that works for you. Non-medical cannabis affects everyone differently. Even the same person may have a different experience on separate occasions or over their lifetime. Frequent and heavy use of cannabis can also lead to dependence for some people and cause problems in other aspects of their life.

In contrast, medical cannabis is tested for safety, you'll know the specific strain, and it is legal with a prescription. It is of higher quality, allows for personalised strain selection, and ensures a consistent supply for pain management.