



Patient Booklet

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Disclaimer

This booklet has been provided by MedReleaf Australia for general information purposes and is intended for distribution by prescribers and pharmacists to their patients. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice and should not be solely relied upon for healthcare decisions. Always consult your prescriber or pharmacist for guidance.

Medicinal Cannabis Basics

How does the Endocannabinoid System work?

The discovery of the Endocannabinoid System (ECS) and its endocannabinoids has enhanced our understanding of the body's self-regulation processes, opening new possibilities for targeted medicinal treatments.

The ECS is a complex network present throughout the body, serving as an internal regulator to help maintain smooth and balanced bodily functions.¹

The body naturally produces cannabinoids, known as endocannabinoids, which interact with cannabinoid receptors in the ECS. This interaction triggers biological responses that influence pain sensation, inflammation, mood, appetite, memory, cognition, sleep, and immune function.¹

How can Medicinal Cannabis Help?

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD) are the two most common cannabinoids found in cannabis plants.

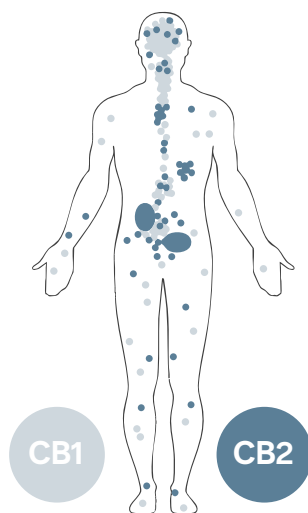
THC is known for its psychoactive effects, which vary depending on the dosage. It can be used for managing various symptoms and conditions, including pain, appetite stimulation, nausea, spasticity, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, insomnia, and depression.²

In contrast, CBD is a non-intoxicating compound found in the cannabis plant.² It has properties such as anti-inflammatory, analgesic, anti-anxiety, anti-convulsant, and neuroprotective effects.²

After consumption, THC and CBD mimic endocannabinoids by interacting with ECS receptors throughout the body, which help to regulate various bodily functions.²

Terpenes are chemical compounds that are naturally found in plants, including cannabis.³ They contribute to the unique aroma of each cannabis cultivar and may offer therapeutic benefits when combined with THC, CBD, and other cannabinoids.³ This hypothesis is known as the 'entourage effect'.³

The Endocannabinoid System



Terpenes

Terpenes are naturally occurring aromatic compounds that are found in plants and herbs, and essential oils. Terpenes are also found in cannabis and are responsible for each strain's unique aroma profile. Over 200 terpenes have been identified in the cannabis plant. Research suggests they may offer therapeutic benefits such as being an antioxidant and providing anti-anxiety and anti-inflammatory properties. While these research findings have not yet been proven in clinical trials, terpenes, when combined with THC, CBD and other cannabinoids, are believed to contribute to the “entourage effect”, enhancing the overall therapeutic potential of medicinal cannabis.³

Some of the most commonly occurring terpenes in cannabis are depicted below.

Terpene	Aroma	Potential Health Benefits
β-Caryophyllene	 Spicy (clove, cracked pepper)	Anti-inflammatory, mental health
α-Pinene	 Pine	Anti-inflammatory, mood, memory
β-Pinene	 Herbal (rosemary, dill, basil)	Anti-anxiety
β-Myrcene	 Musky, earthy	Analgesia, anti-microbial, anti-fungal
Limonene	 Citrus	Mood-alleviating, nausea, vomiting, pain
Linalool	 Fresh, floral	Analgesic, mood-alleviating, sleep
Terpinolene	 Pungent, smoky	Antioxidant
α-Humulene	 Earthy	Anti-inflammatory
α-Bisabolol	 Sweet, floral	Anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial

This information is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. Terpenes have not been evaluated by the TGA and are approved for flavouring purposes only

Dose Titration – Start Low and Go Slow

Your prescriber will determine and prescribe the appropriate dose of medicinal cannabis for the treatment of your condition. This prescriber dose can vary among individuals and different conditions. Your prescriber will take several factors into account, including:

- The condition(s) being treated
- Whether or not you have prior experience with cannabis
- The strength of the medicinal cannabis product
- The route of administration of the medicinal cannabis product

It is recommended that patients start with a low dose, gradually increase it and remain at the lowest effective dose. This approach helps ensure optimal benefits from medicinal cannabis while minimising the risk of side effects.

No matter what condition is being treated, it is recommended to:

START LOW - THEN TITRATE

Everyone, particularly individuals without prior cannabis experience, should commence with the lowest possible dose.

Your prescriber will advise on gradually increasing the dose of medicinal cannabis until the desired effect is achieved. Different products have varying levels of THC and CBD, and the actual amount received in each dose depends on the specific product used.

Remember: Start low, then titrate your dose.

The goal is to find the MINIMUM effective dose.

Baseline vs Breakthrough Therapy

When managing your medical condition, a combination of baseline treatment and breakthrough therapy is often required. For effective baseline therapy, it is recommended to start with formulations that have a long duration of action, such as oral oils and pastilles, which provide sustained relief over an extended period.

It is important to note that oral formulations with a longer duration of action may not be ideal for rapid relief of breakthrough symptoms. In such cases, your prescriber may customise your treatment by adjusting dosages or considering alternative formulations, such as inhalation of dried herb or resin cartridges, which are known for their fast-acting effects.

Recognising the distinct benefits of each formulation allows for a more tailored and effective management strategy for individual needs.

Side effects of Medicinal Cannabis

As with all medications, medicinal cannabis can cause some side effects. The severity of these side effects may differ based on the type and dosage of the medicinal cannabis product used and can vary among individuals. While some people may not experience any side effects, it is important to inform your prescriber or pharmacist if any arise.

The “start low, then titrate” approach generally helps minimise unwanted side effects from higher doses. If side effects occur, your prescriber or pharmacist may recommend reducing your dose and increasing it more gradually over time.

The following are some examples of side effects associated with medicinal cannabis:²

Most common	Common	Rare
Drowsiness/fatigue		Orthostatic hypotension
Dizziness	Euphoria	Psychosis/paranoia
Dry Mouth	Blurred vision	Depression
Anxiety	Headache	Ataxia/ disorientation
Nausea		Tachycardia (after titration)
Cognitive effects		Cannabis Hyperemesis
		Diarrhoea

* This is not a comprehensive list of all possible side effects associated with the use of cannabis-based medicines.

How to use – Dried Herb with Vaporiser



Onset of action: 5 minutes



Peak effect: 10 to 30 minutes



Duration of effect: 2 to 4 hours

What is a Dried Herb Vaporiser?

A dried herb vaporiser is a device that heats dried plant material to create a vapour that can be inhaled. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has only approved the use of dried herb via vaporisation with a TGA approved vaporiser purchased from a pharmacy.

Advantages and benefits of vaporising

Vaporised medicinal cannabis is inhaled and absorbed by the lungs, providing a rapid onset of effects. Therefore, dried herbs are usually best suited for breakthrough symptomatic control, but can also be used as baseline depending on the patient’s needs.

Vaporising prevents the inhalation of contaminants and harmful combustibles associated with smoking medicinal cannabis. In addition, smoking can result in the physical loss of up to 40% of the medication, resulting in medication wastage.⁴ Unlike other inhalation methods like smoking or disposable vapes, dry herb vaporisers produce minimal vapour and odour, with little to no noticeable inhalation sensation. You will know you are inhaling your medication by the taste and smell of the vapour.

How to vaporise?

1. Grind your dried herb

Grind the herb to a medium consistency using a grinder. Grinding the herb too finely may result in combustion, while grinding it too coarsely may lead to uneven heating. Weigh out the prescribed dose using scales, then place into the vaporiser.

2. Load vaporiser

Load the dried herb into the vaporiser. To ensure even airflow, avoid packing the vaporiser chamber too tightly with your medication.

3. Turn on/heat device

Optimal temperatures of 180–200°C should be set to vaporise cannabinoids. Exceeding these temperatures is not recommended, as maintaining the correct temperature ensures patients can benefit from both cannabinoids and terpenes while avoiding the release of potentially harmful combustion products.

4. Dose using the Foltin Puff procedure²

Inhale for 5 seconds, hold inhalation for 10 seconds, and then exhale fully. It is normal for not all of the plant matter to be inhaled when vaporising, but the dried herb will usually turn less green and more brown to indicate the whole dose has been delivered.

5. Wait 30 mins between doses if needed

The goal is to find the MINIMUM effective dose.

6. Maintenance

Regularly cleaning your vaporiser according to the user manual is highly recommended. This helps ensure an accurate and therapeutic outcome while maintaining the device in optimal condition.

7. Storage

Store at or below 25°C in its original container in a secure place away from direct exposure to light, heat, and moisture.

Note: The instructions provided above serve as general guidance. For specific instructions for your chosen vaporiser, please consult the product manual.

How to use – Resin Cartridge



Onset of action: 5 minutes



Peak effect: 10 to 30 minutes



Duration of effect: 2 to 4 hours

What is a Pure Resin Cartridge?

A pure resin cartridge is another way to dose medicinal cannabis via inhalation. Pure resin cartridges contain medicinal cannabis resin, also known as cannabis extract or cannabis concentrate. This resin is a highly concentrated form of cannabis that is produced by extracting the active compounds (such as THC and CBD) from the cannabis plant material. They are discreet, easy to use, and ready for immediate use without the need to grind, weigh, or pack the vaporiser, as required with dried herbs. A resin cartridge is used with a 510-thread cartridge battery unit.

Pure resin cartridges provide rapid symptom relief, which can be used according to a prescribed dosing schedule or as required. Please check with your prescriber or pharmacist on your prescribed dosage and schedule.

How to use a Resin Cartridge

1. A resin cartridge is intended for use with a 510-battery thread. If you are unsure about which device to use, please speak to your prescriber or pharmacist.
2. Follow the instructions provided in the leaflet to properly attach and use the resin cartridge.
3. Repeat the dose after 15 to 30 minutes if needed or follow the instructions from your prescriber.
4. The goal is to find the minimum effective dose.
5. Store the cartridge upright at room temperature or below 25°C. Store it in a secure place away from direct exposure to light, heat and moisture.

How to use – Medicinal Cannabis Oil



Onset of action: 30 to 90 minutes



Peak effect: 2 hours



Duration of effect: 6 to 8 hours

What is medicinal cannabis oil?

Medicinal cannabis oil is a highly concentrated liquid extracted from the cannabis plant, containing mainly THC and CBD. Following the extraction, the concentrated oil is then blended with a carrier oil to facilitate consumption.

Oil formulations are absorbed more slowly but have a longer lasting effect. They are commonly used as a baseline treatment to provide extended relief for chronic conditions such as chronic pain, nausea, and various other symptoms. Oils are best absorbed after a fatty meal and can be placed under the tongue, or swallowed orally. Please check with your prescriber or pharmacist on your prescribed dosing schedule.

How to take medicinal cannabis oil

1. Measure the prescribed dose from the bottle using the dropper or syringe provided.
2. Place the measured dose on or under the tongue.
3. Take the dose with a fatty meal if possible to help with absorption. Examples of fatty meals include Greek yogurt and avocado.
4. Cover the lid tightly and store the bottle at or below 25°C in its original package in a secure place away from direct light, heat and moisture.
5. Clean the syringe thoroughly and let it air dry before its next use. Make sure no water enters the oil to maintain its integrity.

Below are some example titration guides for medicinal cannabis oil treatment. However, it is important to follow the advice of your prescriber or pharmacist, as this guide may not be tailored to your specific symptoms or needs.

CAT 1-3 Oils (CBD dominant and Balanced Oils)

DAY	1st Dose	2nd Dose	3rd Dose
1-2	0.25mL	0.25mL	x
3-4	0.25mL	0.5mL	x
5-6	0.5mL	0.5mL	x
7-8	0.5mL	0.75mL	x
9-10	0.75mL	1mL	x
11-12	0.75mL	0.75mL	0.75mL
13-14	1mL	1mL	1mL
Day 15 onwards	Continue titrating dose up until desired outcome is achieved, maximum dosage is reached or if you develop undesirable side effects.		

CAT 5 Oils (THC dominant)

DAY	1st Dose	2nd Dose	3rd Dose
1-2	0.1mL	0.1mL	x
3-4	0.1mL	0.2mL	x
5-6	0.2mL	0.2mL	x
7-8	0.25mL	0.25mL	x
9-10	0.3mL	0.3mL	x
11-12	0.25mL	0.25mL	0.25mL
13-14	0.3mL	0.3mL	0.3mL
Day 15 onwards	Continue titrating dose up until desired outcome is achieved, maximum dosage is reached or if you develop undesirable side effects.		

How to use – Pastilles



Onset of action: 30 to 60 minutes



Peak effect: 2 hours



Duration of effect: 4 to 6 hours

What are medicinal cannabis pastilles?

Medicinal cannabis pastilles, also known as gummies, are a type of ingestible cannabis product. They are typically small and dome-shaped and are infused with cannabinoids, such as THC and CBD along with other ingredients.

What are the benefits of Pastilles?

Pastilles are designed to be chewed and dissolved slowly in the mouth. They can be easily cut, allowing precise and simple dosing. They come in a range of palatable flavours, making them suitable for individuals who find the taste of medicinal cannabis unpleasant. Pastilles are also brightly coloured and easy to grab which may assist those patients who are vision impaired or have hand dexterity problems.

The pastilles have a shorter duration of action, which helps minimise unwanted extended effects, for example, drowsiness in the morning following a nighttime dose. Pastilles do not need to be taken with a fatty meal, as they are formulated to be taken regardless of food intake. However, patients may choose to take their pastilles with food if they wish.

How to take medicinal cannabis pastilles?

1. Take out the prescribed dose of pastille from the child-proof bag.
2. Chew the pastille slowly in the mouth and swallow.
3. Seal the bag and store the resealed bag in a cool, dry place.
4. Store at or below 25°C in its original package in a secure place away from direct exposure to light, heat, and moisture.
5. It is recommended to wait up to 60 minutes to assess the effects before administering an additional dose if needed, or follow the instructions given by your prescriber.

Note: Pastilles typically contain a high sugar content. If you are diabetic or taking medications to regulate blood sugar levels, please consult your doctor or pharmacist before consuming them.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is it legal to use medicinal cannabis?

Yes. Legislation changed in 2016, allowing prescribers to prescribe medicinal cannabis via the Therapeutic Goods Administration's Special Access Schemes (SAS) or Authorised Prescriber Scheme. Medicinal cannabis in Australia is only available on prescription.

2. Can I drive or operate machinery while I am on medicinal cannabis?

Due to its THC content, medicinal cannabis can impair your ability to drive or operate machinery, similar to other medications that cause drowsiness or affect your cognitive function. However, driving while using CBD-only products is allowed, provided your ability to drive is not impaired.

In most Australian states and territories, except Tasmania, it is currently illegal to drive with THC in your system. Patients using medicinal cannabis containing THC should avoid driving or operating machinery, as it could lead to serious legal consequences. THC can remain detectable in the body for several days after the last dose. If you have concerns about driving while using medicinal cannabis, please consult your prescriber.

3. Can I drink alcohol while taking medicinal cannabis?

Combining cannabis and alcohol is not recommended. Alcohol may increase the likelihood of experiencing negative side effects such as drowsiness and anxiety. Please consult your prescriber before you combine your medicinal cannabis therapy with any alcohol.

4. Can I travel with medicinal cannabis?

Domestic travel with medicinal cannabis in Australia is permitted. It is strongly advised to carry the medication in its original packaging, along with a copy of your prescription and a doctor's letter to present to authorities if needed.

When travelling overseas, it is best to be cautious and investigate the legal status of medicinal cannabis in the country or countries you are wanting to visit. The legal status of its use and possession can vary between countries. Please check with relevant authorities to confirm whether it is legal to bring medicinal cannabis. You may begin your research on the Australian Government's Smart Traveller webpage.

5. Is medicinal cannabis likely to interact with other medicines?

Both CBD and THC can interact with other medications, so it is essential to consult your prescriber or pharmacist before starting medicinal cannabis. It is particularly important to consult your prescriber if you are taking warfarin, blood thinners, antidepressants, antipsychotics, anticonvulsants, heart medications or immunosuppressants. Your prescriber can request any MedReleaf product information to help with your prescription.

6. What if I forget to take my medicinal cannabis?

Wait until the next scheduled dose to take your medication. Avoid taking a double dose to compensate for a missed one. Doubling the dose may lead to undesirable side effects.

7. Is medicinal cannabis covered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)?

No, medicinal cannabis is not covered by PBS. Please check with your individual health insurance provider, or community care organisation (eg BlueCare, NDIS), as some companies are assisting patients by covering some of the costs of private medicinal cannabis prescriptions. Some patients who hold DVA cards may be eligible to obtain scripts under RPBS. For further information, please check with your prescriber.

8. How do I store my medication?

Unless otherwise specified, medicinal cannabis products should be stored in a cool, dry place, ideally below 25°C, and kept away from direct heat or sunlight. It is recommended to keep all medicinal cannabis products out of reach and sight of children. Certain medicinal cannabis products may have different storage requirements, so it's best to consult your dispensing pharmacist or prescriber for accurate storage instructions.

9. What if I accidentally take more than prescribed?

Immediately contact your prescriber, pharmacist or the Poison Information Centre (**available on 13 11 26**) for advice. If you experience persistent severe symptoms, for example, vomiting or paranoia, please go to the emergency department at the nearest hospital as soon as possible.

10. What should I do with unused medicinal cannabis?

Do not share medicinal cannabis with anyone who has not been prescribed it by their own prescriber. Your medicinal cannabis product may not be appropriate for someone else even if they have the same condition or symptoms as you. Medicinal cannabis should not be disposed of via wastewater or household waste. Please take any unused medicinal cannabis to the nearest pharmacy to be disposed of as per pharmacy and state regulations.

Your Treatment Diary

Patient Name:

Prescriber Name:

Medical Conditions:
.....
.....
.....
.....

Medicinal Cannabis Products:
.....
.....
.....
.....

Notes:
.....
.....
.....
.....

Patient Dosing Diary

Product Name(s):

Condition(s):

Day 1Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

Day 2Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

Day 3Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

Patient Dosing Diary

Day 4

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

012345678910

Day 5

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

012345678910

Day 6

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

012345678910

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Patient Dosing Diary

Day 7

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Day 8

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Day 9

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

0

1

2

3

4

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10

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Patient Dosing Diary

Day 10		Time of Use
Date:		
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
Record symptoms/effects/benefits:		
1: worst health to 10: best health		
		

Day 11		Time of Use
Date:		
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
Record symptoms/effects/benefits:		
1: worst health to 10: best health		
		

Day 12		Time of Use
Date:		
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
Record symptoms/effects/benefits:		
1: worst health to 10: best health		
		

Patient Dosing Diary

Day 13

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

A horizontal scale from 0 to 10. Above each number is a face icon showing a gradient from blue (worst) to red (best). Below the numbers is a corresponding colored bar.

Day 14

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

A horizontal scale from 0 to 10. Above each number is a face icon showing a gradient from blue (worst) to red (best). Below the numbers is a corresponding colored bar.

Day 15

Time of Use

Date:

	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM
	mL/mg	AM/PM

Record symptoms/effects/benefits:

1: worst health to 10: best health

A horizontal scale from 0 to 10. Above each number is a face icon showing a gradient from blue (worst) to red (best). Below the numbers is a corresponding colored bar.



References: **1.** Lutz, B. (2020). Neurobiology of cannabinoid receptor signaling. *Cannabinoids*, 22(3), pp.207–222. doi:<https://doi.org/10.31887/dcns.2020.22.3/blutz>. **2.** MacCallum, C.A. and Russo, E.B. (2018). Practical considerations in medicinal cannabis administration and dosing. *European Journal of Internal Medicine*, 49(49), pp.12–19. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejim.2018.01.004>. **3.** Russo, E.B. (2011). Taming THC: potential cannabis synergy and phytocannabinoid-terpenoid entourage effects. *British Journal of Pharmacology*, 163(7), pp.1344–1364. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-5381.2011.01238.x>. **4.** Guidance for the use of medical cannabis in Australia: Overview. (2023) Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Available at: <https://www.tga.gov.au/resources/resource/guidance/guidance-use-medicinal-cannabis-australia-overview>

Please note, medicinal cannabis products are unregistered and are therefore only available through the TGA Special Access Scheme.