

Accessing Medical Cannabis under RPBS

Tetra Health strongly supports Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) patients looking to treat their chronic conditions using alternative therapies.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) may consider funding medicinal cannabis for its clients in certain circumstances, under a framework with criteria as set out below. The framework ensures decisions on whether or not to fund medicinal cannabis are based on the best scientific evidence available, and are consistent with Commonwealth, State and Territory laws.

For any queries about your eligibility for medical cannabis funding, please call the Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre on **1800 552 580** or visit <https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-treatment/help-cover-healthcare-costs/manage-medicine-and-keep-costs-down/medicinal>.

What is the process?

Under this framework, DVA may consider funding medicinal cannabis only under circumstances when:

1. DVA has an existing liability to treat the medical condition and for accepted disabilities;
2. the amount of cannabis taken is determined by clinical need;
3. the treatment is supported by several high quality scientific studies with very few or no credible opposing findings that it is effective in treating the condition;
4. first line treatment (if available and appropriate) for the condition has been attempted and has failed;
5. the treatment is legal, i.e. it is consistent with Commonwealth, State, and Territory laws (DVA would require a copy of relevant approvals);
6. the treatment is listed under the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods, unless approval is sought from the Therapeutic Goods Administration under the Special Access Scheme; and
7. DVA has received a written assessment from the treating doctor that medicinal cannabis would clinically benefit the patient and
 - a. the specialist has advised the patient of potential contraindications;
 - b. the specialist has undertaken a suicide and mental health assessment and determined there is no increased risk from medicinal cannabis on suicide ideation or mental health; and

- c. the patient has no current substance use disorder and has low risk for substance use disorder.

I am a DVA Gold Card holder what do I do now?

1. Book an appointment at Tetra Health either via telehealth or in clinic (see website for details).
2. Complete your initial consult and if the doctor deems you eligible they will submit application to the TGA.
3. Tetra Health will then submit to the DVA your TGA approval letter/s, pain specialist letter, mini mental health assessment (this can be completed by your regular treating GP) and supporting letter to DVA. VAPAC either approve or ask for more information, especially if not adequate justification provided (this process can take up to 4 weeks).
4. Once approved, the DVA approval letter is sent to Tetra Health or yourself (please forward this to Tetra to retain for our records). Only after the approval has been received your Tetra Health doctor will write prescription and contact DVA for authority number. The prescriptions for THC or Schedule 8 Medications need to be written monthly and DVA DO NOT ALLOW repeats; CBD or Schedule 4 Medicines can have repeats.
5. DVA does not cover the entire cost of the consultation at Tetra Health. However, DVA may reimburse you for costs already incurred upon completion of D1181 Application for Reimbursement form.

What conditions will DVA approve the use of Medical Cannabis for?

The DVA does subsidize medical cannabis for veterans through an approval process, however in recent times have refused for PTSD and Anxiety. The process is the same for both in clinic and TeleHealth consultations, however the DVA (upon accepting an application) will cover some of the consultation costs in addition to product for in-clinic but not TeleHealth.

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Use the link below to view the DVA checklist for Medical Cannabis Submission -

https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/health%20and%20wellbeing/healthcare_costs/dva_med_can_fund_sub_check.pdf