

Treatment

# Sativex<sup>®</sup> (nabiximols)

- What is Sativex<sup>®</sup> and how does it work?
- How is Sativex<sup>®</sup> administered?
- What are the potential side effects of Sativex<sup>®</sup> treatment?
- How much does Sativex<sup>®</sup> cost?
- General information
- For more information on multiple sclerosis and other multiple sclerosis treatments

There are several therapies available for treating specific symptoms of multiple sclerosis that work without altering the course of the disease. This includes treatments for muscle problems such as stiffness and tremors, fatigue, neurological symptoms such as visual disturbances, incontinence and neuropsychological problems such as depression, anxiety or memory difficulties.

## What is Sativex® and how does it work?

The active ingredient of Sativex is nabiximols, which consists of cannabis extracts called cannabinoids. The principal cannabinoids are THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (cannabidiol). It is used to improve symptoms related to muscle stiffness (spasticity) in multiple sclerosis when other medicines have not worked.

Spasticity describes the muscle stiffness that may be experienced by people living with multiple sclerosis. Spasticity means there is an increase in muscle tone, that is, when the muscle is moved, there is more resistance to this movement than there normally would be; muscles feel more rigid.

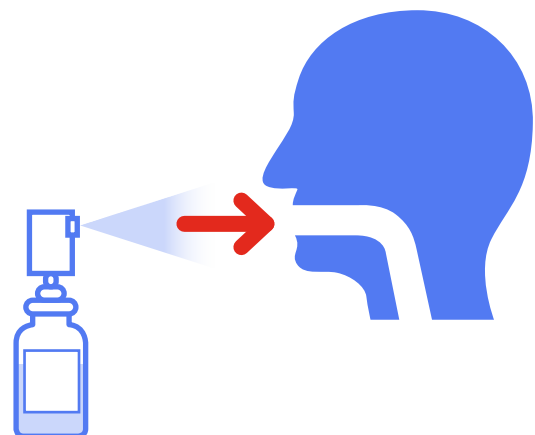
## How is Sativex® administered?

Sativex® is a mouth spray (oromucosal spray). Each glass spray container holds 10 millilitres of liquid, equivalent to up to 90 sprays.

### Your four-week trial of Sativex®:

Only a specialist physician (neurologist or rehabilitation physician) can start you on treatment with Sativex®. The specialist will assess you from time to time to see if you should carry on taking it. Before you start using Sativex® your specialist doctor will conduct a thorough assessment of how bad your spasticity is and how it has responded to other treatments. You will then have a four-week trial of Sativex® after which your specialist will do another assessment to see whether Sativex® is helping you.

Only if you have shown a significant improvement in your spasticity related symptoms after these four weeks should you continue to be treated with Sativex®. Your doctor will assess you from time to time to see if you should carry on taking it.



# What are the possible side effects of Sativex®?

Sativex® helps most people living with multiple sclerosis, but it may have unwanted side effects in some people. You may not experience any of them. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you notice anything that is making you feel unwell while you are using Sativex®.

You are more likely to experience side effects when you start your treatment. They are usually mild and wear off within a few hours.

The most common side effect of Sativex® is feeling dizzy or tired. Other common side effects are: lack of energy or feeling weak or generally unwell, problems with your memory or having trouble concentrating, feeling abnormal or drunk, feeling sleepy or drowsy,

blurred vision, constipation or diarrhea, feeling or being sick, loss of balance or falling over, changed sense of taste or a dry mouth, mouth problems, including burning, pain or mouth ulcers.

Sativex® is not recommended for women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy within the next three months or breastfeeding. Sativex is not recommended for use in children or adolescents below 18 years of age due to lack of safety and efficacy data.

People with a history of psychotic problems should not take the drug.

# How much does Sativex® cost?

Sativex® has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for the treatment of patients with spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis.

It has not yet been approved for listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). It is available from selected pharmacies and costs approximately \$700-\$800 for a six- to eight-week supply.

Please consult your neurologist or rehabilitation physician to see if Sativex® is the right treatment for you and to gain further information about the treatment.

# General information

## In Australia, Sativex® is supplied by:

Emerge Health Pty Ltd  
Suite 3, Level 1, 2 Theatre Place  
Canterbury VIC 3126

Phone: 03 9077 4486

Email: [customerservice@emergehealth.com.au](mailto:customerservice@emergehealth.com.au)

Website: [www.emergehealth.com.au](http://www.emergehealth.com.au)

# For more information on multiple sclerosis and other multiple sclerosis treatments

- Speak to your neurologist about what treatment best suits your individual circumstances.
- MS nurses can also provide information, training and ongoing support in managing your immunotherapy.
- We can provide emotional and practical support for every stage of your journey. For more information visit [www.msplus.org.au](http://www.msplus.org.au)
- For more information about multiple sclerosis treatments, research, clinical trials and for your state MS organisation visit [www.msaustralia.org.au](http://www.msaustralia.org.au)

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## References

1. Sativex® Product Information, 7 April 2017: [www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au)
2. MS Trust UK: [www.mstrust.org.uk/a-z/nabiximols-Sativex](http://www.mstrust.org.uk/a-z/nabiximols-Sativex)

## Note

MS Plus does not recommend any specific disease-modifying treatment for people living with multiple sclerosis. Decisions about any treatments, taking into consideration the potential benefits and side effects for each individual's circumstances, should be made in careful consultation with the person's neurologist.

The information supplied in this document is collated from material provided by the relevant pharmaceutical company and MS Australia.