



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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## **NOTICE: MORPHINE FOR INJECTION CONTAINING PRESERVATIVE – CAUTION REGARDING ROUTES OF ADMINISTRATION<sup>1</sup>**

The Adult Hospital Level and Paediatric Hospital Level Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and Essential Medicines List (EML) currently recommend the use of morphine injection for various indications.

Morphine injection 10mg/ml and 15mg/ml is available on national contract in a split contract between Pharma-Q and Unimed Healthcare. However, there is a difference in the excipients contained in the products provided by the two suppliers:

1. **Unimed Healthcare** morphine injection contains a preservative, sodium metabisulphite 0,1% m/v. The professional information indicates that administration can be by subcutaneous, intramuscular, or slow intravenous injection only. The product **cannot be administered via the intrathecal (spinal) route. It can therefore not be used for epidural anaesthesia.**

Unimed Healthcare Morphine 10mg/ml and 15mg/ml **cannot** be administered by the intrathecal route.

2. **Pharma-Q** morphine injection does not contain any preservatives. These products are indicated for administration by slow intravenous infusion, subcutaneous, or intrathecal injection.

Pharma-Q Morphine 10mg/ml and 15mg/ml **can** be administered by the intrathecal route.

Health care providers are advised to check the brand of morphine available at the facility to ensure that the intended route of administration is aligned to the specific product's professional information recommendations. They are further encouraged to report any side effects and/or sub-therapeutic outcomes as adverse drug reactions for routine pharmacovigilance monitoring and investigation, through either the MedSafety app for smart phones or by emailing [adr@sahpra.org.za](mailto:adr@sahpra.org.za).

<sup>1</sup> Prepared with support from the Western Cape's Circular: H/2025 UNIMED BRAND OF MORPHINE 10MG/ML AND 15MG/ML INJECTIONS – CAUTION REGARDING ROUTES OF ADMINISTRATION

**Injectable morphine products available on national tender:**

NSN	Product	Supplier	Contract
<b><i>Contain preservative, do not use for spinal injections</i></b>			
189703413	Morphine Hydrochloride; 10mg/ml; injection; 1 ml	Unimed Healthcare (Pty) Ltd	HP06-2024SVP
189700425	Morphine Hydrochloride; 15mg/ml; injection; 1 ml	Unimed Healthcare (Pty) Ltd	HP06-2024SVP
<b><i>Does not contain preservative, can be used for spinal injections</i></b>			
189703413	Morphine Hydrochloride; 10mg/ml; injection; 1 ml	Pharma-Q (Pty) Ltd	HP06-2024SVP
189700425	Morphine Hydrochloride; 15mg/ml; injection; 1 ml	Pharma-Q (Pty) Ltd	HP06-2024SVP

Pharma-Q (Pty) Ltd, the supplier of **preservative-free Morphine Hydrochloride 10 mg/ml (1 ml)** and **Morphine Hydrochloride 15 mg/ml (1 ml)** injections, has informed the NDoH of supply constraints affecting these products. The department recommends procuring preservative-free Morphine Hydrochloride injections through quotation until the supply issue is resolved.

**Healthcare facilities are advised to review their current stock levels and prioritise the use of preservative-free formulations for intrathecal and epidural procedures.**

**Circular dissemination:**

Provinces and Healthcare Facilities are requested to distribute and communicate this information in consultation with the Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committees and all other relevant stakeholders.

Kind regards



**MS K JAMALOODIEN**

**CHIEF DIRECTOR: SECTOR-WIDE PROCUREMENT**

**DATE:** 14/2/2025