



NATIONAL ESSENTIAL
MEDICINES LIST COMMITTEE

NATIONAL ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST COMMITTEE (NEMLC) BULLETIN

FOR THE MEETING HELD ON THE 27 FEBRUARY 2025: MEETING OUTCOMES FOR STAKEHOLDER DISSEMINATION

Accessible on the following platform:

National Health Insurance (NHI) Website: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-comm/>

The following are the latest editions of the Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and Essential Medicines List (EML)

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE



**STGs and EML 2020 Edition
(plus individual chapters
for the 2024 edition
ratified by NEMLC)**

ADULT HOSPITAL LEVEL



**STGs and EML 2019 Edition
(plus individual chapters
for the 2024 edition
ratified by NEMLC)**

PAEDIATRIC HOSPITAL LEVEL



**STGs and EML 2023 Edition
updated February 2025**

TERTIARY AND QUATERNARY




EML February 2025 Edition





ACCESS TO THE STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST

The following formats of the STGs and EML are accepted by the National Department of Health (NDoH):

 **NHI website (latest version of the STGs and EML):** The STGs and EML can be accessed using the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>. Click on the relevant tab to access the STGs, EMLs and technical documents for each Level of Care. Refer to Annexure A on guidance on how to navigate the website and access the relevant documents.

 **Knowledge Hub eLibrary** on the link: <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/e-library>. All the STGs and EMLs and related technical documents from the 2020/2024 review period have been moved to the NHI webpage on the NDoH website. The historic technical documents are in the process of being transferred. In the interim, if there are any historic technical documents you require, please email EDP @ SAEDP@health.gov.za.

 **For webinar recordings aimed at strengthening implementation of the STGs and EML:** <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinars>.

 **EMGuidance mobile application:** To sign up, use the following link: <http://onelink.to/sy896k>.

Please note there may be a lag time for any updated documents published on the NHI webpage to be transcribed onto the EMGuidance platform.

 **COVID-19 rapid review reports** are available on the **NDoH website** at: <http://www.health.gov.za/covid-19-rapid-reviews/>.



ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, ESSENTIAL DRUGS PROGRAM (EDP) CIRCULARS

Circulars that are developed by the EDP are disseminated to stakeholders and uploaded on the Affordable Medicines webpage on the National Health Insurance (NHI) website. These circulars can be accessed on the following links:

NHI website: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-comm/> and <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/> (errata)

The following circulars and errata were disseminated for the period January 2025 – March 2025:

- ❶ **Notice EDP14032025/01:** Supply Constraints with Docetaxel 20mg/ml injection 1ml for Oncology Treatment and Interim Therapeutic Alternatives (14 March 2025).
- ❶ **Notice AMD/6MAR2025:** Essential Drugs Communication platform on WhatsApp – EDP communication in WhatsApp communities (07 March 2025).
- ❶ **Notice AMD/07February25:** Supply constraints with rifampicin-based combinations Rifampicin/Isoniazid (150/75mg and 300/150mg formulations) for Tuberculosis (TB) treatment – interim therapeutic alternatives recommended by the Affordable Medicines Directorate (06 March 2025).
- ❶ **Notice 2025/02/EDP/01:** Erratum to the published Paediatric Hospital STGs and EML, 2023, 5th edition (4 March 2025).
- ❶ **Notice AMD17022025/01:** Withdrawal of Phenobarbital 16mg/5ml 100ml Syrup from Contract HP12-2023LQ/01 (20 February 2025).
- ❶ **Notice AMD/5FEB2025:** Morphine for injection containing preservative – caution regarding routes of administration (14 February 2025).
- ❶ **Notice 2025/01/23/EDP/01:** Erratum to the published Primary Healthcare (PHC) and Adult Hospital Level (AHL) STGs and EML, 2024 Editions (31 January 2025).
- ❶ **Notice 2/2025 TB CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT:** Revised guidance on TB Preventative Therapy (TPT) in pregnancy (30 January 2025).
- ❶ **Notice 2025/01/13/EDP/01:** Notice of Call for Application to NEMLC and ERCs (27 January 2025) (**Closed 28 February 2025**).
- ❶ **Notice EDP22012025/01:** Anastrozole availability and therapeutic alternative (22 January 2025).
- ❶ **Notice 2025/01/13/EDP/03:** Publication of NEMLC approved updates to the PHC STGs and EML – 2024 Edition (15 January 2025). The circular outlines updates to the following chapters in the PHC STGs and EML for the 2024 edition:
 - PHC Chapter 13: Immunisation
 - The circular outlines the publication of the following PHC implementation slide decks:
 - PHC Chapter 4: Cardiovascular Conditions
 - PHC Chapter 5: Skin Conditions
 - PHC Chapter 8: Kidney and Urological Disorders
 - PHC Chapter 11: HIV and AIDS
 - PHC Chapter 13: Immunisation
 - PHC Chapter 17: Respiratory Conditions
 - PHC Chapter 18: Eye Conditions
 - PHC Chapter 20: Pain
 - PHC Chapter 22: Medicines used in Palliative Care



Please email SAEDP (SAEDP@health.gov.za) if you would like to be added to the mailing list for EDP updates (circulars, chapter updates etc.)



UPDATES TO THE ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST AND THERAPEUTIC INTERCHANGE DATABASE

The EMLs and Therapeutic Interchange (TI) database have been removed from the current STGs and EML repositories as they are being updated to align with the medicine recommendations made during the 2020-2024 NEMLC review cycle and will be uploaded once updated versions are available. For any interim queries on the EML or TI database, kindly contact the EDP on the following email: SAEDP@health.gov.za. The Therapeutic Interchange Policy may still be accessed at the following link: https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Therapeutic-Interchange-Policy_July2021_final.pdf

The following key therapeutic interchange updates have been made however updates to the therapeutic change database itself is to follow as indicated above:

- **PHC Chapter 4: Cardiovascular Conditions/ AHL Chapter 3: Cardiovascular System – Hydrochlorothiazide/Indapamide for uncomplicated hypertension** – Indapamide/HCTZ are considered examples of the thiazide/thiazide-like diuretics class.



PRIMARY HEALTHCARE AND ADULT HOSPITAL LEVEL STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST



The following chapter has been reviewed and is currently undergoing clinical editing as part of the 2024 edition of the STGs and EML (for ratification at next NEMLC meeting):

➤ **PHC Level:**

- PHC Chapter 7: Family Planning

The following items were reviewed by NEMLC:

- **DMPA-SC Injection** – The medicine review for DMPA-SC was ratified for publication following the clinical editorial review of the PHC Chapter 7: Family Planning. It is important to note that DMPA-SC has now been incorporated in the STG as an EML item. It is now recommended as an alternative progestin-only injectable outside of the progestin-only injectable class. This update will be implemented on 01 October 2026 when the next HP03-2026CHM: Supply and Delivery of Contraceptives and Hormone Modulating Agents Contract will start, if the item is awarded.
- **Atropine for Organophosphate poisoning** – NEMLC supported the inclusion of a high strength 100mg/mL formulation of atropine on the EML, in response to requests received. This 100mg/mL strength formulation is more conducive to the administration of the relatively higher doses of atropine required for the management of organophosphate poisoning. Updates to the STG, (AH Chapter 19: Poisonings Section 19.18.2 organophosphate poisonings), incorporating guidance on the use of the high strength formulation are underway. The high strength 100 mg/mL formulation of atropine is currently not registered in South Africa. As a result, the NDoH is in the process of facilitating a bulk Section 21 approval for this indication.
- **Azithromycin dose for tick-bite fever** – The dose of oral azithromycin for the management of mild to moderate tick bite fever was changed from a dose of azithromycin 500mg 12 hourly, to 500mg once daily. An erratum (Refer to Notice **2025/01/23/EDP/01**) has been published to reflect this change, and both the PHC CH 10: Infections and related Conditions and AHL CH 9: Systemic and Healthcare Associated Infections have been updated accordingly and republished.
- **Morphine Injections – Formulation and Routes of Administration** – An external query was received regarding the availability of preservative free morphine injection which is exclusively needed for intrathecal administration. A circular was drafted to highlight the different formulations of morphine injection available on contract and the need to preserve the preservative free morphine formulations for indications where it will be required for use intrathecally. Refer to Notice **AMD/5FEB2025** for guidance on procurement and route of administration of the morphine injections available on contract. The STG, AHL chapter 12: Anaesthesiology and intensive care stipulates that for intrathecal administration, only preservative free medicines may be used.

DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED SINCE LAST NEMLC BULLETIN

➤ **PHC Level**

Chapters:

- PHC Chapter 10: Infections (*Updated*)
- PHC Chapter 13: Immunisation (*Updated*)

Implementation Slide Decks:

- PHC Chapter 4: Cardiovascular Conditions
- PHC Chapter 5: Skin Conditions
- PHC Chapter 8: Kidney and Urological Disorders
- PHC Chapter 11: HIV and AIDS
- PHC Chapter 13: Immunisation
- PHC Chapter 17: Respiratory Conditions
- PHC Chapter 18: Eye Conditions (6 February 2025)
- PHC Chapter 20: Pain
- PHC Chapter 22: Medicines used in Palliative Care

➤ **AH Level**

Chapters:

- AH Chapter 9: Systemic and Healthcare Associated Infections (*Updated*)



PAEDIATRIC HOSPITAL LEVEL STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST

The completed Paediatric Hospital Level STGs and EML, 2023 edition, updated February 2025 is available for download on the NHI webpage on the following link: health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Paediatric-STGs-and-EML-2023-Edition_Updated-February-2025.pdf

- Errata to the Paediatric STGs and EML 2023 edition have been published and can be accessed on: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>
 - March 2025
 - October 2024
 - July 2024
 - January 2024
 - December 2023
- Presentations from the Paediatric Hospital Level STGs and EML 2023 edition launch webinar series (held in September 2023) can be found on the Knowledge Hub Webinars tab at the following link: <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinars>.



TERTIARY AND QUATERNARY HOSPITAL LEVEL ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST

The following items were reviewed by NEMLC:

- **Aromatase Inhibitor Class** – The aromatase inhibitor class was reviewed by NEMLC as clarity was required on this class due to stock availability issues within the class. Due to their differing mechanisms of action, as well as different pricing, anastrozole and letrozole are generally used initially, with exemestane reserved for patients who have disease progression. NEMLC has recommended that the aromatase inhibitor therapeutic class include anastrozole and letrozole; with exemestane to be kept outside of the class for use in patients who have tried either anastrozole or letrozole and experienced disease progression. The Tertiary and Quaternary EML will be updated accordingly.

Final reviews and supporting technical documents are published on the NHI website on the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>



NEW EDP WHATSAPP COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

For the latest updates to the EDP, join our WhatsApp channel below:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/GEN6bH1rKYVKSJ1bz34Ne9>

OR

Scan the QR code





WEBINAR SERIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STGS AND EML

Take note of the advertisements shared *via* the Knowledge Hub mailing list, EDP stakeholder mailing list and through the NDoH Facebook page, for the series of webinars to be held showcasing the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) process applied to the review of the STGs and EML and the updated chapters, medicine reviews and costings that have been published as part of the 2020-2024 review cycle of the PHC and Adult Hospital Level STGs and EML.

Webinars presentations and recordings for the most recent series are available on the Knowledge Hub Webinars tab, on the following link: <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinars>

Date	Webinar Title	Link
25 June 2024	Webinar 1: Health Technology Assessment	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/national-department-health-standard-treatment-guidelines-essential-medicines-list-session-1
16 July 2024	Webinar 2: Mental Health Conditions – updates to the STGs and EML	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/mental-health-updates-ndoh-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicine-list
30 July 2024	Webinar 3: Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Family Planning STGs and EML	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/obstetrics-and-gynaecology-and-family-planning-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential
13 August 2024	Webinar 4: Adult Critical Care – introduction to new STGs and EML	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/adult-critical-care-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicines-list
27 August 2024	Webinar 5: Infections STGs and EML, and Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Report	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/infections-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicines-list-and-antimicrobial
17 September 2024	Webinar 6: Emergencies and Injuries and Poisonings – Updates to the STGs and EML	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/emergencies-injuries-and-poisonings-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicines
29 October 2024	Webinar 7: HIV and AIDS – Updates to the STGs and EML	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/hiv-and-aids-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicines-list
26 November 2024	Webinar 8: Blood and Blood Forming Organs, Haemophilia – Updates to STGs and EML	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/blood-and-blood-forming-organs-and-haemophilia-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicines-list
11 February 2025	Webinar 9: Cardiovascular Conditions – Updates to the STGs and EML	https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/cardiovascular-conditions-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicines-list

Upcoming Webinars scheduled (Invitation to follow):

08 April 2025	Webinar 10: Rational Medicine Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Navigating the STGs and EML documents - Morphine injections with preservatives: administration considerations - Morphine Solution: new formulation - Amphotericin B: Deoxycholate and Liposomal usage
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Additional webinars to follow throughout 2025
Watch this space

Annexure A: Guide on how to access the Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Medicines List and related technical documents on the NHI website (<https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>.)

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HOME CHIEF DIRECTORATES FAQ RESOURCES PHOTO GALLERY EVENTS

Essential Drugs Programme

The unit oversees development and implementation of the Standard Treatment Guidelines (STG's) and Essential Medicines List (EML) of South Africa through the ministerially appointed National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC).

The EML refers to the list of medicines deemed to satisfy the priority health care needs of the population.

The STG's provides guidance to health care professionals on the use of medicines which appear on the EML. It consists of a collection of chapters containing disorder groups, background information on the disorder, treatment regimens, as well as other relevant information.

Click here for all information relating to

- PHC STGs & EML
- AHL STGs & EML
- Paediatric Hospital level STGs & EML
- Tertiary & Quaternary level EML

Click here for

- Circulars
- NEMLC bulletins
- Webinars, Presentations & Campaigns

Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Medicines List (STGs and EML) Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) Communication

HOME CHIEF DIRECTORATES FAQ RESOURCES PHOTO GALLERY EVENTS

Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Medicines List (STGs and EML)

South Africa has committed to "achieve Universal Health Coverage including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all", one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations. Therefore, an Essential Medicines List (EML) with supporting Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) has been developed, for different levels of care.

The respective STGs and EML for primary healthcare and hospital levels (adults and paediatrics), and the EML for tertiary level of care are described below. The STGs and EML satisfies the priority needs of the South African population, provided for by the National Drug Policy of 1996 and is based on the WHO EML concept of evidence-medicine principles of comparative efficacy, safety, and affordability. Developed and maintained by the ministerially appointed National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC), Technical Expert Review Sub-Committees of NEMLC and the Essential Drugs Programme from the Affordable Medicines Directorate of the National Department of Health (NDoH).

The rationale for inclusion or exclusion of a medicine to the EML is described in NEMLC evidence reports, medicine reviews and costing analyses.

The therapeutic interchange database lists therapeutic alternatives for medicines listed on the respective EML.

Primary Healthcare Hospital Level - Paediatrics Hospital Level - Adults Hospital Level - Tertiary And Quaternary Governance & Policies

Click on the relevant tab to access updates to the STGs & EML for each level of care

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Paving the way for UHC

The current term of office of the Ministerial National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC) draws to a close in April 2025. As the department reflects on the Committee's work, it is reminded of the crucial role this dedicated group plays in shaping the future of healthcare in South Africa.

Established in accordance with the National Drug Policy (1996), the NEMLC's aim is to ensure that only the most appropriate medicines are selected for the public sector. Its decisions are driven by a comprehensive, unbiased framework that balances public health relevance, clinical need, safety, efficacy, affordability, and practical considerations. The NEMLC develops and reviews the South African Essential Medicines List (EML) to guide clinical practice in all public sector health establishments, and inform the procurement of essential medicines in the public sector. The EML is accompanied,

where possible, by Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs), which are prepared across all three levels of care: primary, secondary, and tertiary/quaternary. The NEMLC is supported by Expert Review Committees (also appointed by the minister), which appraise and assess evidence across multiple health topics related to the STGs and EML.

Over the course of NEMLC's current term of office (which began in October 2021 and will end on 7 April 2025), the NEMLC has completed over 100 medicine reviews and costing analyses informing updates to the STGs and EML. NEMLC members, supported by the secretariat from the Essential Drugs Programme, ensure that every decision made is backed by the latest evidence and aligned with national health priorities. The NEMLC Terms of Reference and technical documents may be found on the department's website, at <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-hpp-edp/>.

As South Africa moves toward strategic purchasing under National Health Insurance (NHI), the NEMLC, with and through its Expert Review Committees, will continue to be at the forefront of strengthening guideline development and health technology assessment processes. All stakeholders involved in these processes are encouraged to collaborate with NEMLC.

The department would like to commend the NEMLC members for their dedication, hard work, tireless contributions, and sincere commitment to ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare for all South Africans. The NEMLC's work has not only shaped the current landscape of healthcare in South Africa but also set the foundation for an even brighter, more equitable future for all. NEMLC members are appreciated for their commitment to advancing universal health coverage and improving the lives of every South African.



The current NEMLC Committee and Secretariat at the meeting held on 27th February 2025 in Johannesburg