



NATIONAL ESSENTIAL
MEDICINES LIST COMMITTEE

NATIONAL ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST COMMITTEE BULLETIN

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

Accessible on the following platform:

National Health Insurance (NHI) Webpage: <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
8th Edition
Updated December 2025**

ADULT HOSPITAL LEVEL



**STGs and EML
6th Edition
Updated December 2025**

PAEDIATRIC HOSPITAL LEVEL



**STGs and EML
updated November 2025**

TERTIARY AND QUATERNARY



**EML
November 2025 Edition**

ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST SPREADSHEET



A list of all the medicines found in the STGs and is an automatic download from the EDP website

https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Essential-Medicines-List_V1.1-2-October-2025.xlsx

CLICK HERE



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):



National Health Insurance (NHI) webpage (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/>. Refer to Annexure A for guidance on how to navigate the webpage and access the relevant documents.



Knowledge Hub eLibrary on the link: <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/e-library>. All the STGs, EMLs and related technical documents from the 2020-2024 review period have been moved to the NHI webpage on the NDoH website. If there are any historic technical documents you may require, please email the Essential Drugs Programme (EDP) at SAEDP@health.gov.za.



EMGuidance mobile application: To sign up, use the following link: <http://onelink.to/sy896k>. Please note there may be a delay before the updated documents published on the NHI webpage are uploaded onto the EMGuidance platform. During that process, a temporary link to the latest PDF version of each chapter will be inserted into the affected chapters on the EMGuidance platform. Once the upload is complete, the temporary link will be replaced with the new material and a footer indicating the version number.



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



EML Spreadsheet: Updated version now available – Version 1.1. **NEW:** Antibiotic AWARe categorisation and tab, as well as corrections to the old version 1.0.



ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, ESSENTIAL DRUGS PROGRAMME CIRCULARS

Circulars developed are disseminated to stakeholders and uploaded on the EDP page on the NHI webpage. These circulars can be accessed on the following links:

NHI webpage: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-comm/> and <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/> (errata). The following circulars were disseminated for the period November 2025 – December 2025:

- ❶ **Notice AMD18Dec25/01:** Update to the Guidance on Isoniazid Preventative Therapy (IPT) in Pregnancy – 18 December 2025
- ❷ **Notice AMD/12 December 2025:** Flucytosine 500mg tablet stock supply and implications for the treatment of cryptococcal meningitis – 12 December 2025
- ❸ **Notice 2025/12/12 EDP01:** Updates to the Primary Healthcare and Adult Hospital Level Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Medicine List – 12 December 2025
- ❹ **Notice 2025/12/09/EDP1:** Notice of Request for Comment on the Standard Treatment Guideline for Acute and Chronic Asthma Management in Adults and Adolescents – 09 December 2025



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.)



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



CONSOLIDATED ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST FOR ALL LEVELS OF CARE ACCESSIBLE ONLINE

The EML from the latest versions of the STGs and EML has been extracted into an Excel® spreadsheet. The extracted EML is not intended to replace the STGs but serve as a guide to which medicines are approved for use in the South African public health sector. For any guidance on how these medicines should be used, the relevant STGs and EML should be consulted. Please review the '**READ FIRST**' tab for further information and disclaimers. This spreadsheet is available for download from the EDP webpage on the National Health Insurance webpage: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>



THERAPEUTIC INTERCHANGE DATABASE

The Therapeutic Interchange (TI) database has been removed from the NDoH webpage as it is being updated to align with the latest medicine recommendations. It will be uploaded once the updated version is available. For any interim queries on the TI database, kindly contact the EDP on the following email address: SAEDP@health.gov.za.

The TI 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

**OTHER DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED SINCE THE LAST BULLETIN**

A guidance document outlining Section 21 considerations for the inclusion of medicines in the STGs and EML has been ratified by the NEMLC. This document sets out the criteria and processes through which medicines not registered with SAHPRA may be considered for review and potential inclusion, and is available at: <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Section-21-Considerations-for-Inclusion-in-the-STGs-EML-and-Therapeutic-Interchange-Database-28-November-2025.pdf>



ATTENTION PLEASE

Flucytosine is listed on the EML for Cryptococcal Meningitis at the Adult and Paediatric Hospital Levels of Care. Flucytosine uptake has been low. Provinces are encouraged to make use of the available stock. For more information on how to access flucytosine as well supply considerations please refer to the circular listed above. For more information about the management of cryptococcal meningitis please refer to the rational medicine use webinar presentation here: [Amphotericin B: Deoxycholate and Liposomal Usage by Dr Gayle Tatz](#)
Access the full webinar recording here: <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/rational-medicine-use-rmu>

ACCESS TO OTHER EML RELATED PAGES - <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-hpp-amd/>

The Master Health Product List (MHPL) which contains all pharmaceutical products currently awarded on national contracts can be accessed on the Pharmaceutical Tenders and Contracts page, on the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-hpp-amd/>. The document also contains different tabs listing pharmaceutical products not awarded on national contracts and a list of items with Provincial Procurement on Quotations (PPQ). The MHPL is updated monthly.

Section 21 Medicines refer to unregistered medicines that can be accessed under specific circumstances by obtaining written authorisation from the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA). SAHPRA may provide authority for the bulk sale and use of the unregistered medicine in accordance with the provisions of the Medicines and Related Substances Act 101 of 1965. The use of the unregistered medicine is considered only for emergency situations where the registered essential medicine is not available for an unmet medical need and there is no therapeutic alternative. The management of the Section 21 medicines procured in bulk in the public sector is undertaken by the Affordable Medicines Directorate, NDoH. The list of medicines currently procured through Section 21 Authorisations can be accessed on the Contract Management Unit (CMU) page, on the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-hpp-amd-cmu/>

Hot List refers to a list of all essential medicines on contract where stock availability remains below 90% and where total orders exceed supplier stock on hand and available stock on hand by provinces is less than two months of forecasted demand. The list includes the root cause for the supply challenge and proposed remedial actions for each listed item. The current Hot List can be accessed on the CMU page, on the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-hpp-amd-cmu/>

Kindly direct all queries, concerns or reports related to stock discrepancies, shortages or other stock related issues to the Department using the following e-mail address: stockalert@health.gov.za, as detailed in Circular no. 13/2025/CMU: Stock Shortage Escalation Protocol circulated on 06 November 2025 accessible here: https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Circular_Stock-Shortage-Escalation-Protocol-06-November-2025.pdf.

The following items were presented to NEMLC in November 2025 for ratification and discussion:

- NEMLC ratified the PHC Chapter 17 Respiratory Conditions and AH Chapter 16 Respiratory Diseases, together with supporting documents for external comments. The documents are published on the Communication page of the EDP webpage on the Request for Comment tab: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-comm/>. It would be appreciated if comments can be received by **16 January 2026**.
- Guidance on the use of IPT in Pregnancy: An updated recommendation on the use of IPT in pregnancy was ratified by NEMLC. The updated medicine review for IPT in pregnancy has been published under the Primary Healthcare and Hospital Level – Adults tab under medicine reviews: [health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Isoniazid-Preventative-Therapy-IPT-in-Pregnancy_V2.0-27-November-2025.pdf](https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Isoniazid-Preventative-Therapy-IPT-in-Pregnancy_V2.0-27-November-2025.pdf). Related updates to the PHC Chapter 11 and AH Chapter 10 were ratified by NEMLC and will be published in Q1 2026. A circular has also been issued as an update to previous communication (dated 6 December 2024) and can be accessed via the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Circular-Update-to-the-Guidance-on-Isoniazid-Preventative-Therapy-IPT-in-Pregnancy-18-December-2025.pdf>
- Since dactinomycin has been recently registered in South Africa, the historically accepted reviews for dactinomycin in nephroblastoma and rhabdomyosarcoma were ratified by NEMLC for publication. The reviews have been published under the Hospital Level - Tertiary and Quaternary tab on the STGs and EML page on the NHI webpage under the Medicine reviews and Costing Analyses section or can be accessed using the following links: [Dactinomycin-Nephroblastoma-Historically-Accepted-Use-N-27-November-2025.pdf](https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Dactinomycin-Nephroblastoma-Historically-Accepted-Use-N-27-November-2025.pdf)
[Dactinomycin-Rhabdomyosarcoma-Historically-Accepted-Use-N-27-November-2025.pdf](https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Dactinomycin-Rhabdomyosarcoma-Historically-Accepted-Use-N-27-November-2025.pdf)
- The *Section 21 Considerations for Inclusion in the Standard Treatment Guidelines, Essential Medicines List and Therapeutic Interchange Database* was ratified for publication. The guideline has been published on the EDP page, under the Governance and Policies tab on the STGs and EML page on the NHI webpage here: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>.
- Darunavir/ritonavir has been added to the Adult Hospital level and Paediatric Hospital level STGs and EML via access through the ARV Drug Resistance Committee (ADReC). The application form and other necessary information can be found on the ADReC tab on the STGs and EML page on the NHI webpage here: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>.

**Season's Greetings from the EDP, NEMLC & ERC!**

As the year draws to a close, we extend our warmest wishes to all our readers, partners, and collaborators.

This festive season, we reflect on the successes, challenges, and the many milestones we've shared together. Your continued support and engagement are at the heart of everything we do.

May this season bring you joy, peace, and moments of rest to recharge for the year ahead. We look forward to continuing our journey with you in the coming year, as we strive to serve and empower our communities.



Topic Prioritisation for the 2025 – 2029 Review Cycle

Due the large volume of potential topics for review, the NEMLC adopts a systematic approach of topic prioritisation and selection of review topics to inform updates to the STGs and EML. Potential topics are identified through several routes. Stakeholders were invited to nominate topics to help inform topic prioritisation for the NEMLC cycle 2025 – 2029, refer to Notice 2024/12/12/EDP/01 accessible here: [NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR COMMENT ON THE NATIONAL STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LISTS FOR ALL LEVELS OF CARE TO GUIDE PRIORITISATION FOR THE 2025 NEMLC REVIEW PHASE](#).

All motivations and comments received during call for comment are systematically logged for record purposes. Prioritisation occurs per STG/EML review cycle and is reassessed annually if required. Submission of comments or motivations does not automatically guarantee that a topic will be reviewed by the NEMLC within the current review cycle. **Topic nomination for this cycle is now closed, and only urgent items will be considered for addition to the current project plan. There may be a call for external comment on certain chapters during the cycle to assist with topic prioritisation within a broad topic area, if required. If an institutional or provincial need has been identified, it is strongly encouraged that PTCs conduct the relevant reviews and explore access through the appropriate mechanisms. Topics which may present public safety concerns are welcomed throughout the review cycle and if classified as urgent will be fast tracked for review.**

Topics are organised within broad topic areas (e.g. Endocrine) for further scoping and prioritisation therein, as STG chapters are no longer reviewed end-to-end every cycle. Several broad NEMLC topic areas were approved by NEMLC in June 2025 for further scoping and prioritisation (see the NEMLC Bulletin (4 September 2025) accessible at: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-comm/>). Scoping documents and prioritisation of specific review topics were ratified by NEMLC for the following broad NEMLC Topic Areas in October 2025: Endocrine, Oncology, Respiratory and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and in November 2025 (Broad Reproductive). Technical work is now commencing through the respective ERC Evidence Working Groups.

STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST

The consolidated Primary Healthcare (8th Edition, 2024) STGs and EML is available for download on the NHI webpage on the Primary Healthcare tab or on the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Primary-Healthcare-Standard-Treatment-Guidelines-and-Essential-Medicines-List-8th-Edition-2024-Updated-December-2025.pdf>

ADULT HOSPITAL LEVEL STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST

The consolidated Adult Hospital Level (6th Edition, 2024) STGs and EML, is available for download on the NHI webpage on the Hospital Level – Adults tab or on the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Hospital-Level-Adults-Standard-Treatment-Guidelines-and-Essential-Medicines-List-6th-Edition-2024-Updated-December-2025.pdf>

PAEDIATRIC HOSPITAL LEVEL STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES LIST

An update to the Paediatric Hospital Level STGs and EML is available for download on the NHI webpage on the Hospital Level – Paediatrics tab or on the following link: [health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Paediatric-STGs-and-EML-2023-Edition_Updated-November-2025.pdf](https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Paediatric-STGs-and-EML-2023-Edition_Updated-November-2025.pdf)

- An update notice to the Paediatric STGs and EML has been published and can be accessed on: https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Paediatric-STGs-and-EML-2023-Edition_Updated-November-2025.pdf
- Presentations from the Paediatric Hospital Level STGs and EML 2023 edition webinar launch (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 Tertiary and Quaternary Hospital Level EML, updated November 2025 is available for download on the NHI webpage on the following link: [Tertiary-and-Quaternary-EM-recommendations-November-2025.pdf](https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/)
Final reviews and supporting technical documents are published on the NHI webpage on the following link: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>



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.
- Webinar 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 | <u>Webinar 1</u> : Health Technology Assessment | https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/national-department-health-standard-treatment-guidelines-essential-medicines-list-session-1 |
| 16 July 2024 | <u>Webinar 2</u> : 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 | <u>Webinar 3</u> : 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 | <u>Webinar 4</u> : 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 | <u>Webinar 5</u> : 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 | <u>Webinar 6</u> : 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 | <u>Webinar 7</u> : 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 | <u>Webinar 8</u> : 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 |
| 11 February 2025 | <u>Webinar 9</u> : Cardiovascular Conditions – Updates to the STGs and EML | https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/cardiovascular-conditions-standard-treatment-guidelines-and-essential-medicines-list |
| 08 April 2025 | <u>Webinar 10</u> : Rational Medicine Use – Updates to the STGs and EML | https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/webinar/rational-medicine-use-rmu |

- Upcoming webinars include:

| Date | Webinar Title |
|------------------|--|
| 10 February 2026 | <u>Webinar 11</u> : Epilepsy – Updates to STGs and EML |



Additional webinars to follow in 2026
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 webpage (<https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>)

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

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