health
Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Enquiries:

Stock queries:
Ms Babalwa Melitafa
E-mail:
Babalwa.Melitafa@health.gov.za

Contracting queries:
Ms Marione Schonfelt
E-mail:
marione.schonfeldt@health.gov.za

Clinical queries:
Essential Drugs Programme
E-mail: SAEDP@health.gov.za

## NOTICE: ZINC PICOLINATE

Provinces and Healthcare Facilities are informed of the media statement released by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority on 08 January 2026 regarding selenium and zinc picolinate-containing products: ***Warning: Selenium and zinc picolinate-containing products for children*** (https://www.sahpra.org.za/news-and-updates/warning-selenium-and-zinc-picolinate-containing-products-for-children/ OR see annexure A below). The media release outlines safety concerns related to zinc picolinate use in children leading to adverse effects such as indigestion, diarrhoea, headache, nausea and vomiting. Refer to the media release for detailed information.

The Primary Healthcare Level (PHC) and Paediatric Hospital Level (PaedHL) Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and Essential Medicines List (EML) recommend zinc supplementation for the indications of cholera, acute diarrhoea and persistent diarrhoea, as outlined in table 1 below:

*Table 1: STG and EML paediatric indications and doses for oral zinc*

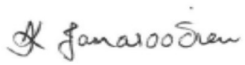
| Indication | Zinc Dosage |
|---|---|
| **Cholera**<br>• PHC: Chapter 2 Gastro-intestinal Conditions, section 2.7 Cholera<br>• PaedHL: Chapter 2: Alimentary Tract, section 2.2.1 Cholera | • Zinc (elemental), oral 10 mg/day for 14 days |
| **Acute Diarrhoea**<br>• PHC: Chapter 2 Gastro-intestinal Conditions, section 2.9.1 Diarrhoea, acute in children<br>• PaedHL: Chapter 2: Alimentary Tract, section 2.2.4 Diarrhoea, acute | • Zinc (elemental), oral 10 mg/day for 14 days |
| **Persistent Diarrhoea**<br>• PHC: Chapter 2 Gastro-intestinal Conditions, section 2.9.2 Diarrhoea, persistent in children<br>• PaedHL: Chapter 2: Alimentary Tract, section 2.2.5 Diarrhoea, persistent | • Zinc (elemental), oral 10mg/day |

There are currently no zinc-picolinate products procured *via* National Contract. Preparation is currently underway for the new liquids tender: HP12-2027: Supply and Delivery of Pharmaceutical Liquids, Alcohol, Ether, Glycerine and Methylated Spirits to the Department of Health. The specifications for zinc syrup will be updated to ensure that the zinc syrup procured excludes zinc picolinate as a salt based on the recent SAHPRA recommendation.

**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 January 2026

**Annexure A**

## MEDIA RELEASE

## Warning: Selenium and zinc picolinate-containing products for children

**For immediate release**

**Pretoria, 8 January 2026 -** The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has been made aware of products in the market containing Zinc picolinate (as a source material for zinc) and/or Selenium intended for use in children.

Both of these ingredients have been identified in the Guidance (SAHPRA Guideline 7.04 / SAHPGL-PEM-COMP-04 v5 CM SE Health Supplements) issued by SAHPRA as not permitted in health supplements for children (persons under the age of 18).

The safety concerns related to children are as follows:

1. Zinc picolinate, at any supplemental dose, can cause side effects which include indigestion, diarrhea, headache, nausea, and vomiting. As the bio-availability of Zn from Zn-picolinate is variable due to multiple factors, the risk of side effects may be higher and unpredictable, and it is unsuitable as a source of elemental zinc supplementation in children; and
2. Selenium, when supplemented to children, represents a safety concern considering the potential differences in selenium daily intake between different population groups. While selenium intake is a viable requirement for children in areas of famine or dietary restriction, the potential adverse effects of selenium overdose are of concern when provided in general supplements/medicines intended for children.

The products currently on the market are marketed and sold, among others, as “Immune boosters” for children, with the main active ingredients being Zinc (when derived from Zinc picolinate) and/or Selenium intended for use in children. These products are indicated for supporting the treatment of colds, flu, diarrhea, and skin-related conditions, rendering the products in question medicines that require registration by SAHPRA.

Any medicine sold that contains Zinc picolinate or Selenium intended for use in children does not qualify as a Category D (complementary) medicine. As such, their sale as a Category D medicine is illegal. Therefore, with effect from the date of publication of this notice, all selenium and zinc picolinate-containing products intended for use in children shall be subject

to registration as a medicine falling into Category A, as defined in Section 14(2) of the Medicines and Related Substances Act, 101 of 1965, and need to be submitted to SAHPRA for registration. The sale of Category D (complementary) medicines containing Zinc picolinate or Selenium and intended for use in children must be withdrawn from the market within six (6) months of the date of this publication.

**Advice for health professionals and distributors:**

SAHPRA requests that Health professionals cease all distribution, selling, and/or dispensing and remove all selenium and zinc picolinate-containing products intended for use in children from stores, storage facilities, and shelves.

Members of the public are urged to return products containing Zinc Picolinate and Selenium when intended for use in children, to their pharmacist, supplying warehouse, or distributor.

**Reporting side effects**

Public and healthcare professionals are encouraged to report any side effects after using a health product by using the Med Safety App. Your report will contribute to our monitoring of these health products.

**Issues by:** Tammy Gopal
CRO: SAHPRA
Tammy.Gopal@sahpra.org.za

For further enquiries/information, contact:
SAHPRA media contact:
Yuven Gounden
Cell: 083 297 1214
E-mail: yuveng@sahpra.org.za

**Notes to Editors:**
SAHPRA will post this media release on its website. Navigate to the News section on the website.
Should you wish to request an interview, please send your request to media@sahpra.org.zaand yuveng@sahpra.org.za
**Include your talking points.**

**About SAHPRA:**
SAHPRA is tasked with regulating (monitoring, evaluating, investigating, inspecting and registering) all health products. This includes clinical trials, complementary medicines, medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics (IVDs). Furthermore, SAHPRA has the added
responsibility of overseeing radiation control in South Africa. SAHPRA's mandate is outlined in the Medicines and Related Substances Act,101 of 1965, as amended, as well as the Hazardous Substances Act, 15 of 1973.
SAHPRA has three pillars to ensure that medicines, medical devices and IVDs meet the requisite standards to protect the health and well-being of all who reside in South Africa:

- Safety
- Efficacy
- Quality

It is these three pillars that define the ethos of SAHPRA.