



health

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NOTICE: ERRATUM TO THE PHENOBARBITAL/PHENOBARBITONE 30 MG TABLETS – STOCK SUPPLY SHORTAGE AND THE PROPOSED THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVES CIRCULAR AND LATEST STOCK UPDATE

Levetiracetam intravenous (IV) injection – Essential Medicine List (EML) status

With reference to the previous circular Phenobarbital/Phenobarbitone 30 mg Tablets - Stock Supply Shortage and the Proposed Therapeutic Alternatives Circular (Reference: 20260624/EDP01), disseminated by the National Department of Health in June 2026, mention of **levetiracetam IV injection**, which was included as a treatment option for hypoxia-ischaemia of the newborn and in neonatal seizures, **has now been removed as a therapeutic alternative**. Although this medicine is registered in South Africa, it is currently not **on the national EML** and is therefore not available on national tender. The Expert Review Committee (ERC) and National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC) will review this medicine for consideration on the national EML in the coming months.

Update on supply of phenobarbital 30 mg tablets and injection

With reference to the previous circular Phenobarbital/Phenobarbitone 30 mg Tablets - Stock Supply Shortage and the Proposed Therapeutic Alternatives Circular (Reference: 20260624/EDP01), supply of phenobarbital tablets has now resumed. The stock may initially be accessed *via* Section 21. Once the Section 21 stock is depleted, phenobarbital should be accessed *via* quotation with Sun Pharma. Provinces and facilities will be informed once the quotation process is active.

The approved Section 21 supply of phenobarbital injection remains stable and this product can be used either intramuscularly (IM) or by slow IV injection (<https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Section-21-Authorisation-re-Phenobarbitone-200mg-INJ-1mL-08-May-2026.pdf>).

Guidance on the use of phenobarbital 30mg tablets

The Primary Healthcare and Paediatric Hospital Level Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and EML recommend the use of phenobarbital oral therapy for several indications. **Please refer to the latest published STGs for the updated antiseizure medicine indications and prescribing guidance**. The latest STGs and EML may be accessed as follows: <https://www.health.gov.za/nhi-edp-stgs-eml/>

Circular implementation and dissemination

Provinces are requested to distribute and communicate this updated information in consultation with the Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committees, healthcare facilities and all other relevant stakeholders.

Note: The Affordable Medicines Directorate (AMD) continues to closely monitor the stock situation for phenobarbital tablets and injection. Any further updates or changes regarding the stock status and clinical guidance will be communicated with urgency.

Kind regards

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CHIEF DIRECTOR: HEALTH PRODUCTS PROCUREMENT

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