

Rifapentine (300 mg tablet)

MSF strongly supports the WHO Global TB Program proposal to include rifapentine 300 mg tablet in the core list of the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines, for tuberculosis preventive treatment (TPT).

Currently, the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines includes rifapentine 150 mg tablet (since 2015).

According to the 2020 WHO consolidated guidelines on tuberculosis: Module 1: Prevention - tuberculosis preventive treatment and the 2020 WHO operational handbook on tuberculosis: Module 1: Prevention -tuberculosis preventive treatment, systematic TPT is recommended for household contacts of bacteriologically confirmed pulmonary tuberculosis patients, for patients living with HIV/AIDS, for patients who have silicosis, receiving dialysis, initiating anti-TNF treatment, and for patients waiting for transplant.

For TPT, 2 options containing rifapentine are recommended: 3-month regimen of weekly rifapentine used in combination with isoniazid (3HP) or 1-month regimen of daily rifapentine used in combination with isoniazid (1HP). According to these 2020 guidelines, the use of 1HP is recommended only for people aged 13 years and above, due to lack of data on appropriate dosing of 1HP for children 12 years and younger (recommendation established on a study restricted to individuals ≥ 13 years old).

The targets agreed upon by the Member States during the 2018 United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB include improving TPT coverage as an essential component. The commitment is to provide TPT to at least 30 million people between 2018 and 2022, including 6 million people living with HIV, 4 million household contacts children aged under 5 years, and 20 million household contacts older than 5 years. In 2018, TPT has been provided only to around 424 000 people and around 539 000 in 2019 (19 % patients were older than 5 years, 81% were children under 5 years).

MSF would like to draw the attention of the Expert Committee to the following points:


- The 300 mg tablet formulation will reduce the pill-burden by half, therefore improving adherence to tuberculosis preventive treatment.

- Currently, rifapentine is off patent, but remains expensive. It is only available as a 150 mg tablet made by its innovator who signed an agreement in 2019 with UNITAID and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria to reduce the price of rifapentine 150 mg for 100 low- and middle-income countries burdened by TB and TB/HIV co-infection.
- According to the WHO Global TB Program application, two manufacturers are developing a 300 mg oral formulation (scored tablet), which availability would be expected in the middle of the last quarter of 2021, following the submission to the WHO Prequalification and the Global Fund's Expert Review Panel.
- It is important to include this 300 mg oral formulation in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines to attract additional manufacturers, increase supply security and better allow for competition between manufacturers to reduce price and improve accessibility, particularly in low-and middle-income countries.

MSF has been using rifapentine in its programs since 2018.

MSF urges the 23rd Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines to include rifapentine 300 mg tablet in the core list of the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines, for tuberculosis preventive treatment.

For Médecins Sans Frontières



Myriam Henkens, MD, MPH
International Medical Coordinator