



*International Office*

*140 Route de Ferney, Case Postale 1224*

*CH-1211 Geneva 1, SWITZERLAND*

*Phone: +41 (0)22 849 84 00*

*Fax: +41 (0)22 849 84 88*

*www.msf.org*

### **I.3 Ethionamide - drug-susceptible tuberculosis meningitis**

MSF strongly supports the proposal from the WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme to include ethionamide 250 mg tablets and 125 mg dispersible tablets in the Core List of both the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (EML) and the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines for Children (EMLc) for the new indication of treatment of drug-susceptible tuberculosis (TB) meningitis.

Currently, ethionamide is listed in the Complementary List of Section 6.2.5 “Antituberculosis medicines” of both the EML and the EMLc, as part of treatment regimens for multi-drug/rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis (MDR/RR-TB).

TB meningitis is a serious form of TB that affects the meninges. It is most common in children under 2 years and in HIV-infected patients. It is a medical emergency, any delay in diagnosis or treatment will result in irreversible neurological sequelae or death.

The 2022 WHO “Consolidated guidelines on tuberculosis. Module 5: management of tuberculosis in children and adolescents” recommend in children and adolescents with bacteriologically confirmed or clinically diagnosed TB meningitis (without suspicion or evidence of MDR/RR-TB), a 6-month intensive regimen (6HRZEto), as an alternative option to the 12-month regimen (2HRZE/10HR)<sup>1</sup>.

MSF “Tuberculosis practical guide for clinicians, nurses, laboratory technicians and medical auxiliaries” recommends the 6HRZEto regimen as a short regimen for drug-susceptible TB meningitis, given at 20 mg/kg once daily (max. 750 mg daily). MSF has been using ethionamide since 2002 in its programs for multidrug resistant tuberculosis.

---

<sup>1</sup> WHO consolidated guidelines on tuberculosis. Module 5: management of tuberculosis in children and adolescents. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240046764>

MSF urges the 24<sup>th</sup> Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines to include ethionamide in the Core Lists of both the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines and the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines for Children for the new indication of treatment of drug-susceptible tuberculous meningitis, while retaining ethionamide for the treatment of multi-drug/rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis on the Complementary Lists in both the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines and the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines for Children.



**Dr. Daniela Belen Garone**

Infectious Diseases specialist and DTM&H  
International Medical Coordinator

**Médecins Sans Frontières | International Office**