

Epoprostenol for treating pulmonary arterial hypertension

WHAT DOES THE GUIDANCE SAY?

Epoprostenol is recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) for government subsidy for treating pulmonary arterial hypertension.

WHAT IS PULMONARY ARTERIAL HYPERTENSION?

Pulmonary arterial hypertension, or PAH, is a rare and serious condition where some of the blood vessels in the lungs are narrower than normal. This can cause high blood pressure in these vessels and a lower blood flow through the lungs. People with PAH may have shortness of breath, chest pain, and dizziness. As the condition worsens, the heart can weaken and eventually fail.

There are four WHO functional classes (I is the least severe, IV is the most severe) that are used to describe the symptoms that a patient may have due to PAH.

PAH can occur because of known causes such as inherited PAH, or it can be caused by reasons that are never known (called idiopathic PAH). Other known causes of PAH are:

- Connective tissue diseases such as scleroderma or lupus
- Congenital heart defects
- Liver disease
- HIV

WHAT IS EPOPROSTENOL?

You may know epoprostenol as Veletri, which belongs to a group of medicines called prostaglandins. It widens blood vessels in your lungs to improve blood flow, and reduce the strain on your heart.

HOW MUCH EPOPROSTENOL CAN I TAKE?

Epoprostenol is given by a slow infusion (drip) into a vein. Your doctor will decide how much epoprostenol you need. The amount you are given is based on your body weight, and your dose may be increased or decreased depending on how well your condition responds to treatment.

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WHO CAN HAVE EPOPROSTENOL?

People can have epoprostenol if they have WHO functional class III or IV symptoms and the following types of PAH:

- Idiopathic PAH
- Heritable PAH
- PAH associated with connective tissue diseases.

Your doctor will advise if epoprostenol is suitable for you.

WHY WAS EPOPROSTENOL RECOMMENDED FOR MAF?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Epoprostenol was recommended because its benefits in improving symptoms for people with PAH justifies its costs.

WHAT DOES LISTING ON THE MAF MEAN FOR ME?

The MAF helps people pay for expensive treatments that are clinically necessary. If your doctor prescribes epoprostenol for you, and you meet the MAF criteria, your treatment cost will be subsidised by 40% to 75%.

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ACE is the national health technology assessment agency under the Ministry of Health (Singapore). It publishes guidances on diagnosing, treating, and preventing different medical conditions based on the latest research information available worldwide.

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