

## Pulmonary surfactant for treating respiratory distress syndrome in premature infants

### WHAT DOES THE GUIDANCE SAY?

Calfactant and poractant alfa are recommended for listing on the Standard Drug List (SDL) for government subsidy for treating respiratory distress syndrome in premature infants.

### WHAT IS RESPIRATORY DISTRESS SYNDROME (RDS)?

RDS occurs when premature babies are born without enough natural surfactant in their lungs. Surfactant is a liquid made by the lungs that keeps the airways (alveoli) open. When a baby does not have enough surfactant, the airways can collapse which disrupts normal lung functioning. This can affect the amount of oxygen delivered to the body and can result in complications such as breathing difficulties and organ failure.

### WHAT IS PULMONARY SURFACTANT?

Surfactant preparations act in place of natural human surfactant, to allow the lung to function normally. Two pulmonary surfactants are approved for use in Singapore - calfactant (Infasurf®) and beractant (Survanta®)- which are made from bovine (cow) sources. Another pulmonary surfactant - poractant alfa (Curosurf®) made from porcine (pig) sources is also available. All surfactants are effective in reducing the risk of complications from RDS.

### HOW MUCH PULMONARY SURFACTANT WILL A BABY RECEIVE?

The baby's doctor will determine how much surfactant the baby needs (which is based on birth weight) depending on their condition and their response to treatment.

### HOW LONG DOES A BABY HAVE TO BE TREATED FOR?

Treatment with a pulmonary surfactant generally continues until symptoms improve. The baby's doctor will determine how long the baby will need to take it for.

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### WHO CAN HAVE PULMONARY SURFACTANT?

Premature babies with breathing difficulties during the first few hours of birth may need treatment with a pulmonary surfactant. The baby's doctor will decide if a pulmonary surfactant is required.

Poractant alfa has not been reviewed for efficacy, safety and quality by Singapore's regulatory agency, the Health Sciences Authority (HSA). Please discuss with your baby's doctor if this product is suitable before treatment is started.

### WHY WERE THEY RECOMMENDED FOR SUBSIDY?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Calfactant and poractant alfa were recommended for subsidy because their benefits in treating RDS in premature infants justify their costs.

Beractant was not recommended for subsidy.

### WHAT DOES LISTING ON THE SDL MEAN FOR PATIENTS?

Drugs on the Standard Drug List (SDL) represent therapies essential for managing common diseases affecting the majority of patients in Singapore.

They are subsidised at 50% for all Singaporean citizens who are treated in a public healthcare institution. Patients from lower to middle income households may receive a higher subsidy of up to 75%.

Published: 1 September 2020

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