

# Govt caps prices of another 106 drugs

## Cancer, HIV Medicines Added To List

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New Delhi: For bringing down prices of medicines for critical diseases like cancer, HIV and diabetes, the government has revised the national list of essential medicines (NLEM) to add 106 more drugs. While 70 other drugs, which are not prescribed frequently or where better alternatives are now available in the market, have been taken off the list.

This means, the total number of essential medicines, prices of which are capped by the government, would increase from 348 to 384, including diagnostic agents and contraceptives.

The move following recommendations from a committee formed by the Union health ministry is expected to make many important drugs affordable or at least reduce their prices significantly to bring relief to patients.

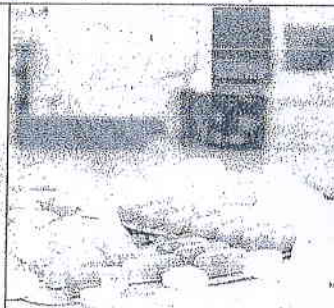
Calling it the "best fit list", the committee under the chairmanship of former Indian Council of Medical Research chief VM Katoch said emphasis was laid on the disease-burden and treatment guidelines as basis for selecting and therefore, medicines which are "aligned with the current treatment guidelines" and those used for treatment of diseases that are "public health problems" have been added to the new list. "Draw-

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➤ So far there were 348 essential medicines listed in NLEM 2011, prices of which were capped by the government

➤ In the revised NLEM 2015, 106 medicines have been added, while 70 medicines have been deleted

➤ NLEM 2015 contains a total of 384 medicines



### Key therapeutic categories for which medicines are added to National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)

Therapeutic category	Number of drugs added	Total drugs in NLEM 2015
Antineoplastic, immunosuppressives and medicines used in palliative care	25	59
Anti-bacterial medicines	5	22
Anti-tuberculosis medicines	9	14
Anti-viral drugs	14	23
Cardiovascular medicines	5	30
Dermatological medicines	5	15
Dialysis solution	1	2
Gastrointestinal	3	16
Immunologicals	4	17
Hormones, other endocrine medicines and contraceptives	3	23
Psychotherapeutics	7	13

ing an essential medicines list (EML) is expected to result in better quality of medical care, better management of medicines and cost-effective use of health-care resources," the committee said in its report.

The new list of essential medicines, which comes into effect immediately, will be revised every three years as per the committee's recommendations.

The committee also suggested that given the diversity in climate, food habits and culture in India, the govern-

ment should also consider inclusion of medicines for priority healthcare conditions for different regions. For instance, kala azar is more prevalent in Bihar whereas Japanese encephalitis is more prevalent in Assam. However, the recommendations did not delve into details of how this has to be done.

The health ministry had constituted the committee under Katoch to evaluate NLEM periodically in order to keep prices under check.

For the full report, log on to [www.timesofindia.com](http://www.timesofindia.com)

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