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WHO Model List of Essential Medicines



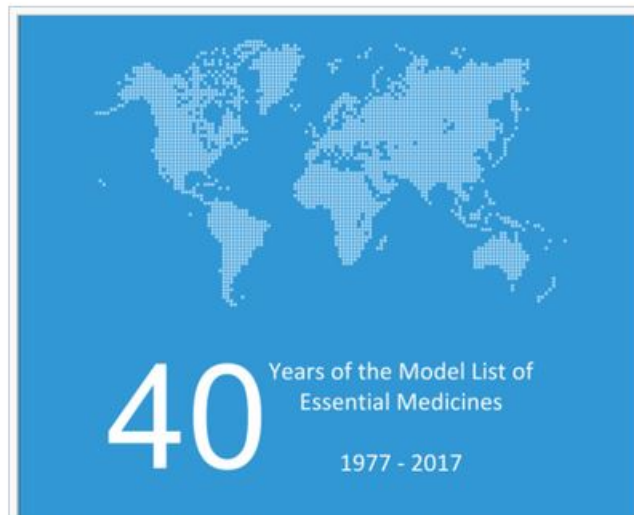
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The **WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (EML)**, published by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), contains the medications considered to be most effective and safe to meet the most important needs in a [health system](#). The list is frequently used by countries to help develop their own local lists of [essential medicine](#).^[1] As of 2016, more than 155 countries have created national lists of essential medicines based on the World Health Organization's model list.^[2] This includes countries in both the [developed](#) and [developing world](#).^[1]

The list is divided into core items and complementary items. The core items are deemed to be the most [cost effective](#) options for key health problems and are usable with little additional health care resources. The complementary items either require additional infrastructure such as specially trained [health care providers](#) or [diagnostic equipment](#) or have a lower [cost-benefit ratio](#).^[3] About 25% of items are in the complementary list.^[4] Some medications are listed as both core and complementary.^[5] While most medications on the list are available as [generic products](#), being under [patent](#) does not preclude inclusion.^[6]

The first list was published in 1977 and included 212 medications.^{[1][7]} The WHO updates the list every two years.^[8] The 14th list was published in 2005 and contained 306 medications.^[9] In 2015 the 19th edition of the list was published and contains around 410 medications.^[8] The 20th edition was published in 2017 and comprises 433 drugs.^{[10][11]} The national lists contain between 334 and 580 medications.^[4]

A separate list for children up to 12 years of age, known as the [WHO Model List of Essential Medicines for Children](#) (EMLc), was created in 2007 and is in its 6th edition.^{[8][12]} It was created to make sure that the needs of children were systematically considered such as availability of proper [formulations](#).^{[13][14]} Everything in the children's list is also included in the main list.^[15] The list and notes are based on the 19th and 20th edition of the main list.^{[3][10]} An **α** indicates a medicine is only on the complementary list.^[3]



2017 marked the 40th anniversary of the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines.

