

---

# Glucosamine excluded from the reimbursement system

---

Interim decision from the review of painkillers  
and anti-inflammatory medicines

---

THE DECISIONS COME INTO FORCE on 2010-05-15

## Glucosamine out of reimbursement system

The TLV is excluding medicines containing glucosamine from the pharmaceutical reimbursement system. Glucosamine is used to ease symptoms arising from osteoarthritis. Studies have not been able to prove to a sufficient degree that glucosamine provides a clear medicinal benefit. The decisions will free up almost 70 million Skr annually. Money which can be used for other urgent areas within the healthcare system. The decisions come into force from the 15th of May 2010.

The cartilage in the joints of the body lends stability and allows the bones of the skeleton to meet each other and provide flexibility. Osteoarthritis is caused by a degradation in the natural balance in the cartilage. This means that the cartilage is thinned out and that the ends of the bones grate against each other creating pain and stiffness. Osteoarthritis can appear in different joints in the body, such as for example in the knees, hip joints, thumbs and big toes. It is most common for patients to be afflicted by osteoarthritis from the age of 50 and up.

### Many medicines against pain

This patient group often needs pain-alleviating medicines as pain is the most common symptom of osteoarthritis. There are many different types of medicines to treat arthritis. Glucosamine is one of the substances here and the approved indication is for treatment of symptoms for mild to moderate osteoarthritis.

### Collaboration with the National Board of Health and Welfare

There are eight medicines in the reimbursement system which contain glucosamine. They are part of our more comprehensive review of painkillers and anti-inflammatory medicines. This review is carried out

in collaboration with the National Board of Health and Welfare within their remit of producing the national guidelines for treatment of musculoskeletal diseases.

### Interim decision in larger review

As there is enough evidence today to examine if medicines containing glucosamine can continue to be reimbursed we have fast-tracked the decisions in regard to them. This is partly due to the large volume of sales for glucosamine.

### Frees up 70 million crowns annually

The medicines concerned in these decisions are for the treatment of mild to moderate osteoarthritis. Quality studies have however not shown sufficiently that glucosamine gives a clear medical effect. This means that the utility gained from glucosamine does not compare to the cost. Our conclusion is that the use of glucosamine is not cost-effective and that the medicines are to be excluded from the benefits system.

Medicines containing glucosamine turn over approx. 125 million Skr per year, of which almost 70 million is reimbursed. The decision to exclude glucosamine from the benefits system will therefore free up almost 70 million crowns per year. These are funds which can be

### These medicines are excluded from the reimbursement system from the 15th of May, 2010:

Medicines	Substance and salt form
Artrox	glucosamine hydrochloride
Glucomed	glucosamine hydrochloride
Comfora	glucosamine sulfate
Donacom	glucosamine sulfate
Glucosine	glucosamine sulfate
Glukosamin Copyfarm	glucosamine sulfate
Glukosamin Ferrosan	glucosamine sulfate
Glukosamin Pharma Nord	glucosamine sulfate

## Why the TLV carries out reviews of the positive list of pharmaceuticals

Our task is to decide on pricing and reimbursement for medicines and medical devices in order to extract as much health as possible for tax funds expended on reimbursement. Besides making decisions on new medicines we carry our reviews of the positive list of pharmaceuticals and decide if medicines should retain their reimbursement status.

We exclude the medicines which do not provide enough utility in relation to their cost. But this does not mean we shall only have cheap medicines in the reimbursement system. If a medicine has positive enough effects on the health and quality of life and on society as a whole, may also be expensive.

### Three principles for decisions

When making reimbursement decisions we must decide if a medicine is cost-effective. This means that we weigh the utility of a medicine against the cost. The cost-effectiveness principle we apply must also be balanced with two other principles. Namely, the

needs and solidarity principle meaning that those with the greatest medical need should get more of healthcare's resources, and the human value principle meaning that the equal value of all people shall be respected

### Comprehensive investigations

Before we make a decision we carry out a comprehensive analysis of data on medical effect and cost-effectiveness which we request companies to submit about their medicines. We also go through the medical and health economic scientific literature available for the group to be reviewed.

We publish all material on [www.tlv.se](http://www.tlv.se) in Swedish and some information in English at [www.tlv.se/english](http://www.tlv.se/english). We also direct some information so that doctors and nurses who prescribe medicines receive information on our decisions so that their patients can review their medications in good time.

### Information on [www.tlv.se](http://www.tlv.se) (in Swedish)

Decisions on glucosamine - [www.tlv.se/glukosamin](http://www.tlv.se/glukosamin)

Decision criteria - [www.tlv.se/principer](http://www.tlv.se/principer)

User Council - [www.tlv.se/brukare](http://www.tlv.se/brukare)

Pharmaceutical reviews - [www.tlv.se/genomgang](http://www.tlv.se/genomgang)

---

# This is the TLV

---

The Swedish Dental and Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Agency (TLV) is a State agency responsible for deciding if a medicine or dental care procedure shall be reimbursed by society. We also have responsibilities on the reformed pharmacy market. Our task is to contribute to good service and access at pharmacies without costs rising for patients and county councils.

We work to extract as much health as possible for tax funds expended on medicines and dental care.

THE SWEDISH DENTAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL  
BENEFITS AGENCY

---

Box 55 [Sundbybergsvägen 1], 171 11 Solna, Sweden

Tel: +46 8 568 420 50, Fax: +46 8 568 420 99

---

[registrator@tlv.se](mailto:registrator@tlv.se), [www.tlv.se](http://www.tlv.se)

---