

11 December 2024

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Tēnā koe Yasir

Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00072084

Thank you for your email on 15 November 2024, asking Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

The total amount of taxpayer money allocated for the procurement and distribution of puberty blockers in New Zealand over the past five years. A breakdown of annual expenditures on puberty blockers during this period."

Are puberty blockers administered or distributed within educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges? If so, please provide details on the policies and protocols governing their administration in these settings.

What clinical guidelines does the Ministry of Health follow regarding the prescription and administration of puberty blockers to minors?

What oversight mechanisms are in place to monitor the use of puberty blockers among youth?

Response

For the sake of clarity, I will address each question in turn.

The total amount of taxpayer money allocated for the procurement and distribution of puberty blockers in New Zealand over the past five years. A breakdown of annual expenditures on puberty blockers during this period.

Health NZ does not hold information on the total costs of procurement and distribution of puberty blockers in New Zealand. However, the following table shows the total reimbursement cost to the pharmacy for all publicly-funded dispensings of GnRH α (gonadotropin releasing hormone analogue) goserelin and leuprorelin. The costs include for those under 25 years of age at the time of dispensing.

Note that this data does not include the reason a medicine was prescribed (clinical indication). Although one indication of these medicines is to block puberty, it may be prescribed for other reasons such as precocious puberty and endometriosis, among others.

Total cost by calendar year					
Chemical	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Goserelin	\$24,767.58	\$41,516.43	\$45,817.83	\$46,890.95	\$48,586.25
Leuprorelin	\$222,657.18	\$235,630.25	\$312,378.23	\$260,274.13	\$216,975.48

Please note that this data is provisional and used for operational purposes. It has not been through the full quality assurance process that we use before publishing data and is therefore subject to change.

Are puberty blockers administered or distributed within educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges?

Puberty blockers are not administered or distributed; they are prescribed for a named individual. Puberty blockers are prescribed by experienced clinicians in the context of an interdisciplinary team approach. Prescription of these medicines occurs in health service settings. Some educational institutions such as universities may have on-site health clinics as part of the services they offer their students. Treatment decisions for those aged less than 18 years are made collaboratively by health professionals, patients, and (as appropriate) their families, through a patient and family-centred process involving informed consent.

If so, please provide details on the policies and protocols governing their administration in these settings.

Puberty blockers are not administered, they are prescribed. As with other medicines, prescriptions for puberty blockers are dispensed at pharmacies. Prescribing clinicians are required to follow clinical best practice guidance on the provision of all medications, including puberty blockers, and are expected to keep up to date with clinical best practice.

What clinical guidelines does the Ministry of Health follow regarding the prescription and administration of puberty blockers to minors?

The Ministry of Health published an evidence brief and position statement on the provision of puberty blockers in the context of gender-affirming care in November 2024. The Ministry of Health's position states that clinicians initiating puberty blockers should be experienced in providing gender-affirming care and be part of an interprofessional team offering a full range of supports to young people presenting with gender-related issues. You can find the Ministry's position statement here:

[www.health.govt.nz/system/files/2024-11/Position Statement on the Use of Puberty Blockers.pdf](http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/2024-11/Position_Statement_on_the_Use_of_Puberty_Blockers.pdf)

In addition to existing clinical pathways that provide guidance on access to services locally and regionally, Health NZ is also developing an updated guideline to support clinicians providing gender-affirming care, including the provision of puberty blockers. The clinical guidelines for gender-affirming care currently available in New Zealand include:

- Guidelines for gender affirming healthcare for gender diverse and transgender children, young people and adults in Aotearoa, New Zealand:
<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/entities/publication/e0aca807-f3f4-4fc3-bf28-4754d8ab4c38>
- Primary Care Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy Initiation guidelines:
https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/rainbow/files/2023/03/Primary-Care-GAHT-Guidelines_Web_29-Mar.pdf.

What oversight mechanisms are in place to monitor the use of puberty blockers among youth?

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Health and other regulatory bodies oversee the practice of health professionals. Medsafe is the New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority

responsible for monitoring the safety of all medicines that have been approved for use in New Zealand. More information about the mechanisms it uses can be found on its website: www.medsafe.govt.nz/Consumers/Safety-of-Medicines/Medicines-Safety-and-Pharmacovigilance.asp.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at HNZOIA@tewhatoru.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Deborah Woodley

Director Starting Well

Planning, Funding & Outcomes