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# Safety in administering medicines

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for neglected tropical diseases



World Health  
Organization





# **Safety in administering medicines for neglected tropical diseases**

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# Glossary

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The definitions given below apply to the terms used in this manual. They are derived from existing publications by the World Health Organization (WHO), including *Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development goals: a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030 (1)* and a forthcoming guideline on taeniasis and cysticercosis.

**Adverse event:** Any untoward medical occurrence that may present during treatment with a medicine but which does not necessarily have a causal relationship with this treatment. It can be caused by either administration of the medicine, or by a coincidental event that by chance happened after drug administration (See also serious adverse event).

**Community drug distributors:** Volunteers frequently utilized by neglected tropical disease programmes to deliver preventive chemotherapy to the individuals in their community as a part of mass drug administration.

**Community mobilization:** A process of capacity-building through which communities, individuals, groups or organizations plan, conduct and evaluate activities on a participatory and sustained basis to improve their health and other needs, either on their own initiative or stimulated by others.

**Control:** Reduction of disease incidence, prevalence, morbidity and/or mortality to a locally acceptable level as a result of deliberate efforts; continued interventions are required to maintain the reduction. Control may or may not be related to global targets sets by WHO.

**Drug coverage:** Proportion of individuals in a targeted population who swallowed a medicine or a combination of medicines. Drug coverage is expressed as a percentage.

**Mass drug administration:** Distribution of medicines to the entire population of a given administrative setting (for instance, state, region, province, district, subdistrict or village), irrespective of the presence of symptoms or infection; however, exclusion criteria may apply. (In this manual, the terms mass drug administration and preventive chemotherapy are used interchangeably.)

**Monitoring and evaluation:** Processes for improving performance and measuring results in order to improve management of outputs, outcomes and impact.

**Neglected tropical diseases:** A diverse set of 20 primarily infectious diseases and disease groups that thrive in impoverished settings, especially in the heat and humidity of tropical climates. These diseases have been largely eliminated elsewhere and thus are often forgotten. They include Buruli ulcer; Chagas disease; dengue and chikungunya; dracunculiasis; echinococcosis; foodborne trematodiasis; human African trypanosomiasis; leishmaniasis; leprosy; lymphatic filariasis; mycetoma; chromoblastomycosis and other deep mycoses; onchocerciasis; rabies; scabies and other ectoparasitoses; schistosomiasis; snakebite envenoming soil-transmitted helminthiasis; taeniasis and cysticercosis; trachoma; and yaws.

**Pharmacovigilance:** The science of and activities relating to the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse effects or any other possible problems related to medicines. Pharmacovigilance is an aspect of patient care that aims to optimize the use of medicines in order to treat or prevent disease. Good pharmacovigilance identifies risks and risk factors in the shortest possible time to avoid or minimize harm.

**Preschool-aged children:** All children aged between 1–5 years who are not yet attending (primary) school.

**Preventive chemotherapy:** Large-scale use of medicines, either alone or in combination, in public health interventions. Mass drug administration is one form of preventive chemotherapy; other forms could be limited to specific population groups such as school-aged children and women of childbearing age. (In this manual, the terms preventive chemotherapy and mass drug administration are used interchangeably.)

**School-aged children:** All children aged between 6–15 years (usually), regardless of whether they are attending school. In some countries, a primary school's enrolment may include individuals aged older than 15 years.

**Serious adverse event:** A medical event that is fatal, life-threatening, disabling, results in hospitalization or in congenital anomaly or birth defect after intake of medication. It is important to distinguish between “severe” and “serious”. The term “severe” is often used to describe the intensity (severity) of a medical event, as in the grading “mild”, “moderate” and “severe”. A severe adverse event is not necessarily serious.

**Side-effect:** Any unintended effect of a pharmaceutical product occurring at doses normally used in humans that is related to the pharmacological properties of the medicine. Essential elements in this

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