

What can be done to improve rational use of medicines?

WHO advises countries to implement national programmes to promote rational use of medicines through policies, structures, information and education. These include:

- a national body to coordinate policies on medicine use and monitor their impact;
- evidence-based clinical guidelines for training, supervision and supporting decision-making about medicines;
- lists of essential medicines used for medicine procurement and insurance reimbursement;
- medicines and therapeutics committees in districts and hospitals to monitor and implement interventions to improve the use of medicines;
- problem-based training in pharmacotherapy and prescribing in undergraduate curricula;
- continuing medical education as a requirement of licensure;
- publicly available independent and unbiased information about medicines for health personnel and consumers;
- public education about medicines;
- elimination of financial incentives that lead to improper prescribing, such as prescribers selling medicines for profit to supplement their income;
- regulations to ensure that promotional activities meet ethical criteria; and
- adequate funding to ensure availability of medicines and health personnel.