



May 25, 2020

**\*\*Notice to Hospitals: Importation of US-Labelled Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP due to COVID-19\*\***

Dear Valued Customer,

**Audience**

Please distribute this notice to Healthcare professionals including pharmacists, cardiologists, critical care physicians, emergency physicians and those involved with treating cardiovascular manifestations in COVID-19 patients.

**Key messages**

- There is an unanticipated and substantial increase in demand for critical care drugs associated with the coronavirus pandemic, including the sympathomimetic amine norepinephrine.
- Given the medical necessity of this product, Health Canada has added Norepinephrine 4 mg/4 mL (1 mg/mL) to the List of Drugs for Exceptional Importation and Sale to allow its importation.
- The US-labelled product imported by Baxter Corporation to Canada should be used in the same manner as the Canadian product, Levophed® (norepinephrine bitartrate injection, USP). Health care professionals should visit <https://health-products.canada.ca/dpd-bdpp/index-eng.jsp> to access the current Prescribing Information on the Health Canada Drug Product Database.
- Please note that the Baxter US-Labelled Norepinephrine is supplied in an ampoule whereas the Canadian product is supplied in vials. In order to avoid the risk of medication errors, Healthcare professionals should confirm proper selection of the intended product to avoid confusion with other products.
- The US-labelled product is identical to the Canadian-labelled product, in terms of the actual product concentration, content and volume. There are however differences in the labelling of the two products. A Table summarizing these differences is provided in Appendix A.

**Issue**

There is an unprecedented demand and shortage of Norepinephrine as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the medical necessity of Norepinephrine, Health Canada has added US-labelled Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP 4mg/4mL ampoules to the Tier 3 Drug Shortages List to allow its importation.

Norepinephrine is a peripheral vasoconstrictor (alpha-adrenergic action) and as a potent inotropic stimulator of the heart and dilator of coronary arteries (beta-adrenergic action). Although there are norepinephrine products marketed in Canada, the US-labelled Baxter Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP 4mg/4mL ampoule is not currently authorized for sale in Canada; however, Health Canada has permitted the exceptional importation and sale of this US-labelled product to mitigate shortages in Canada. A limited quantity of the US-labelled Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection USP 4 mg/4 mL (1 mg/mL) ampoules in a 4 mL format will be made available by Baxter Corporation for Canadian patients.



## Products affected

- Pfizer Canada ULC LEVOPHED (norepinephrine bitartrate injection, USP) 4 mg/4 mL (1 mg/mL) vials in a 4 mL format.
- Baxter Health Corporation (IL, USA) Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP 4 mg/4 mL (1 mg/mL) ampules in a 4 mL format.

## Background information

Levophed (norepinephrine bitartrate injection) is used for the restoration and maintenance of blood pressure in various acute hypotensive or shock states, including in some COVID patients. It may also be useful as an adjunct in the treatment of cardiac arrest and profound hypotension.

## Information for health care professionals

This drug should be administered by appropriately trained healthcare professionals familiar with its actions, characteristics, and hazards.

The US-labelled product (Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP) is identical to the Canadian-labelled product (Levophed), in terms of the actual drug substance content. There is a difference in container and therefore handling between Levophed, supplied in glass vials, and the US-labelled product, supplied in easy break ampules.

There are a few differences in the labelling of the vials and cartons. A table comparing the labels is provided in Appendix A.

Health care professionals should visit <https://health-products.canada.ca/dpd-bdpp/index-eng.jsp> to access the current Prescribing Information for Levophed® (norepinephrine bitartrate injection, USP) on the Health Canada Drug Product Database.

Hospitals should also be aware that the barcodes on the US-Labelled Norepinephrine may not be readable by scan. A facility-generated sticker may be required to enable barcode scanning.

## Action taken by Health Canada

The Minister of Health signed the Interim Order Respecting Drugs, Medical Devices and Foods for a Special Dietary Purpose in relation to COVID-19. Drugs included on the List of Drugs for Exceptional Importation and Sale referenced in the Interim Order are eligible for the exceptional importation and sale provisions provided for in the Interim Order. *Health Canada has added Norepinephrine to this list, which permits the importation and sale of US-labelled Norepinephrine.*

## Report health or safety concerns

Managing marketed health product-related side effects depends on health care professionals and consumers reporting them. Any case of (specific side effect) or other serious or unexpected side effects in patients receiving Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP should be reported to Baxter Corporation or Health Canada.

Baxter Corporation  
7125 Mississauga Rd  
Mississauga, ON  
L5N 0C2  
Telephone: 1-888-719-9955



You can report any suspected adverse reactions associated with the use of health products to Health Canada by:

- Calling toll-free at 1-866-234-2345; or
- Visiting MedEffect Canada's Web page on Adverse Reaction Reporting (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/medeff/report-declaration/index-eng.php>) for information on how to report online, by mail or by fax.

For other health product inquiries related to this communication, contact Health Canada at:



Marketed Health Product Directorate  
E-mail: [hc.mhpd-dpsc.sc@canada.ca](mailto:hc.mhpd-dpsc.sc@canada.ca)  
Telephone: 613-954-6522  
Fax: 613-952-7738

You will be able to order Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP directly from Baxter by the following options.

- By Phone: 1-888-719-9955, Monday to Friday 8:00AM to 6:00PM Eastern Time
- By Email: [HospitalCare\\_CA@baxter.com](mailto:HospitalCare_CA@baxter.com)
- By Fax: 1-888-719-9986

For any additional questions about this new offering from Baxter, please reach out to your local Baxter Sales Representative. For inquiries about placing your order contact Customer Care at 1-888-719-9955 or [HospitalCare\\_CA@baxter.com](mailto:HospitalCare_CA@baxter.com).


Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
 Signer Name: Linda Lindsay  
Signing Reason: I am the author of this document  
Signing Time: 5/25/2020 | 2:29:20 PM PDT  
C18E717580204C788896D6976394859D

Linda Lindsay  
Director, RA & QA Canada  
Baxter Corporation



**APPENDIX A**

	LEVOPHED Label – NOT AVAILABLE	 <p>The image shows the US-Labelled Baxter Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP label. It includes the following text: AIN00610, NDC: 36000-162-01, Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP, 4 mg/4 mL (1 mg per mL), RX only, CONTAINS NO SULFITES – PRESERVATIVE FREE, Each mL contains: norepinephrine bitartrate equal to 1mg norepinephrine base. FOR IV INFUSION ONLY - DILUTE BEFORE USE. PROTECT FROM LIGHT. Directions: See Insert. LOT: EXP.: Baxter, Deerfield, IL 60015 USA, 68797 02, and 2018-10-31.</p>
<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Canadian LEVOPHED (Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP)</b>	<b>US-Labelled Baxter Norepinephrine Bitartrate Injection, USP</b>
Presentation	4 mL <u>vial</u> containing 1 mg/mL norepinephrine bitartrate	4 mL <u>ampule</u> containing 1 mg/mL norepinephrine bitartrate
Language	English and French	English only
Non-medicinal ingredients*	sodium metabisulfite, sodium chloride, water for injection	sodium chloride, water for injection
Administrative/Regulatory Information	DIN 02241981 Product Code: 03375	NDC 36000-162-10 Product code: AIN00610
Therapeutic Class	Sympathomimetic Amine for use in hypotensive emergencies	Not included
Administration	For I.V infusion. Must be diluted. Discard unused portion	For I.V infusion Only. Dilute before use. Discard unused portion



Warning	Use only if clear or pale yellow and contains no precipitate. Avoid contact with iron salts, alkalis or oxidizing agents.	Do not use the solution if its color is pinkish or darker than slightly yellow or if it contains a precipitate. Avoid contact with iron salts, alkalis, or oxidizing agents.
Storage	Storage between 20-25 °C. Protect from light and freezing. Store vials inside carton.	Store at 25°C (77°F); excursions permitted to 15 to 30°C (59 to 86°F) [see USP Controlled Room Temperature]. Retain in carton until time of use. PROTECT FROM LIGHT

\* Due to the absence of sodium metabisulfite in US-labelled product, a specific warning, "CONTAINS NO SULFITES, PRESERVATIVE FREE, is included in this product and not in LEVOPHED.