

Technical Bulletin No.20 (March 2015)

CHANGE OF PACK SIZE FOR IRON TABLETS AND IRON & FOLIC ACID TABLETS

Background

Iron, and iron plus folic acid supplementation is used as a public health intervention for the purpose of improving pregnancy outcomes and reducing maternal anaemia in pregnancy. Iron tablets, and iron plus folic acid fixed dose combination tablets are also used as nutritional supplementation for prevention and/or treatment of iron and folic acid deficiencies in the general population. UNICEF specifically targets pregnant and lactating women as they are at risk of developing anaemia.

Safety issues

Large amounts of iron can be harmful. It is known that accidental iron overdose is a leading cause of child poisoning, and accidental consumption of a dose of 200mg of elemental iron or more has caused fatal iron toxicity in children¹. Safety measures that can reduce the risk of iron overdose in children include:

- blister packaging or a secure lid such as a child-proof lock on the bottle packs;
- keeping the iron supplements out of reach of children.

Challenges

The former packaging of 1000 tablets required the product to be repackaged at the time of dispensing by counting the appropriate number of pills and placing them into plastic or paper bags. This poses several risks and challenges, including poor hygiene, loss of identification and traceability, perception of a low-value product, quality of storage and easy access to children.

To ease dispensing at health care facilities, and improve consumer protection and demand, the pack size has been reduced from packs of 1000 tablets to packs of 100 tablets.

Replacements

OLD		NEW	
S1550000	Ferrous salt 60mg iron tabs/PAC-1000	S1550010	Iron 60mg tab/PAC-100
S1550025	Fe(as fum.)+folic 60+0.4mg tab/PAC-1000	S1550030*	Iron 60mg + Folic ac. 400mcg tab/PAC-100
		S0000212 *	Iron 60mg + Folic acid 400mcg tab/PAC-10x10

* Iron & folic acid fixed dose combination tablets are available in bottle packs of 100 or in blister packs of 10 blisters each with 10 tablets.

For more and technical information on the items please refer to the UNICEF Supply catalogue
<https://supply.unicef.org/>

¹ Office of Dietary Supplements. Iron: Dietary Supplement Fact Sheet February 19, 2015.
<http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-HealthProfessional/>

References

Information is based on the WHO guideline: *Daily iron and folic acid supplementation in pregnant women*. Geneva, World Health Organization; 2012

http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/micronutrients/guidelines/daily_ifa_supp_pregnant_women/en/

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