

## Recommendations and Reasons

Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED)

# Methyl aminolevulinate

**Product:**

METHYL AMINOLEVULINATE (Metvix®)  
topical cream

**Class of drugs:**

Pro-drug of a topical photosensitizer  
(protoporphyrin IX)

**Indication:**

Superficial basal cell carcinoma (sBCC)

**Manufacturer:**

Galderma Canada Inc.

**Date of CED Review:**

March 2011

**Highlights of Recommendation:**

- ♦ Methyl aminolevulinate is a topical cream containing a photosensitizer indicated for the treatment of superficial basal cell carcinoma (sBCC), a form of skin cancer. It is to be used in combination with photodynamic therapy, a type of light therapy.
- ♦ The committee reviewed three clinical trials that compared methyl aminolevulinate plus photodynamic therapy to alternative treatments, including excision surgery, cryotherapy (freezing), or imiquimod (another topical cream). The study findings suggest that methyl aminolevulinate plus photodynamic therapy is likely as effective as cryotherapy, excision surgery, or imiquimod at curing sBCC.
- ♦ The committee questioned whether methyl aminolevulinate provides any additional therapeutic value versus existing treatment options. The main benefit of using a topical cream for the treatment of sBCC is the prevention of scarring. However, methyl aminolevulinate is not indicated for use on certain areas of the face, where scarring is the biggest concern. Furthermore, in patients for whom surgery and radiation therapy are not appropriate, imiquimod topical cream is available.
- ♦ Methyl aminolevulinate costs \$300 - \$600 per treatment course. Because methyl aminolevulinate must be used in combination with photodynamic therapy, additional costs to the health care system would be incurred. This makes the total cost of treatment much more expensive than imiquimod.
- ♦ Overall, the committee noted that alternative therapies for the treatment of sBCC are available and methyl aminolevulinate provides no added therapeutic or economic value over these treatment options.

**Background:**

Superficial basal cell carcinoma (sBCC) is a type of skin cancer that typically appears on sun exposed areas of the body. It is slow-growing, rarely metastasizes (spread to other organs), and is not life-threatening in most cases.

Treatments options include excision, radiation therapy, curettage (scraping) and electro-desiccation, cryotherapy (freezing), and topical drug therapy with 5-fluorouracil or imiquimod.

Methyl aminolevulinate is a topical cream indicated for use in conjunction with photodynamic therapy in sBCC patients for whom other therapies (e.g. surgery, radiation) are considered less appropriate. It is to be used outside the H-zone of the face (e.g. ears, nose).

## CED Recommendation

The CED recommended that methyl aminolevulinate (Metvix®) not be funded on the basis that this drug does not provide added clinical or economic advantages over existing comparators.

## Executive Officer Decision

Based on the CED's recommendation, the Executive Officer decided not to fund methyl aminolevulinate (Metvix®) for the treatment of superficial basal cell carcinoma.

## Status

Not funded through the Ontario Public Drug Programs.

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**Detailed Discussion:**

*No additional details.*



Ministry of  
**Health and Long-Term Care**  
Ontario Public Drug Programs

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