

WHO releases essential diagnostics list for 2021

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To address the lack of access to tests and testing services in multiple countries, WHO since 2018 has published a yearly essential diagnostics list (EDL), a basket of recommended in vitro diagnostics that should be available at point-of-care and in laboratories in all countries to increase timely and life-saving diagnoses.

The latest edition, published, includes WHO-recommended COVID-19 tests (PCR and Antigen), expands the suite of tests for vaccine-preventable and infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases (such as cancer and diabetes), and introduces a section on endocrinology, which is important for reproductive and women's health.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO said, 'All countries should pay particular attention to the diagnostics space and use the essential list to promote better health, keep their populations safe, and serve the vulnerable.'

Dr Mariângela Simão, Assistant-Director General, Access to Medicines and Health Products WHO, said, "In all countries, the use of appropriate diagnostic tests can help inform evidence-based treatment and responsible use of medicines, resulting in improved allocation of resources and better health outcomes."

The recommendations in the list are based on robust evidence and take into account country suitability. The process is overseen by the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on In Vitro Diagnostics (SAGE IVD), a group of specialists from around the world with long standing experience in the field of IVDs and their implementation, their use, regulation and evaluation.

The EDL is not prescriptive – it is intended as a policy tool for countries to create their own national lists based on their local context and needs. WHO will shortly also publish a step-by-step guide to aid countries wishing to develop a national list.