

## Aptiom

Abu Dhabi · access guide

# How to access Aptiom for partial-onset (focal) epilepsy from Abu Dhabi: 2026 pathway via Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi comprehensive epilepsy programme and DoH-coordinated dispense

By Reserve Meds clinical & regulatory team. Last reviewed 2026-05-20.

Abu Dhabi's adult and paediatric neurology footprint is anchored by the Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi comprehensive epilepsy programme (with video-EEG monitoring, neurosurgical evaluation, and the full antiepileptic-drug formulary), with parallel services at Sheikh Khalifa Medical City (SKMC), Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City (SSMC), Burjeel Medical City, NMC Royal Hospital, Mediclinic Airport Road, and Tawam paediatric neurology (Al Ain). Abu Dhabi-emirate pharmaceutical regulation is coordinated through the Department of Health Abu Dhabi (DoH), working with the federal Emirates Drug Establishment (EDE) layer. Aptiom (eslicarbazepine acetate; the international Zebinix brand is the same molecule from Bial) is the third-generation sodium-channel inhibitor in the dibenzazepine family, once-daily, with a cleaner enzyme-induction and hyponatraemia profile than carbamazepine or oxcarbazepine. For an Abu Dhabi-resident adult or paediatric patient aged 4 or over with confirmed partial-onset seizures, the operational question is which prescribing centre fits the case, how the Zebinix supply reaches the dispensing pharmacy through DoH + EDE coordination, what the insurance pre-authorisation conversation looks like under Thiqa for Emirati nationals and Daman/commercial cover for residents, and how the monthly refill cycle and serum sodium monitoring schedule settle into an Abu Dhabi family's life.

This page explains how the pathway works in 2026 for an Abu Dhabi-resident patient: who qualifies, where the neurologist conversation happens, where the prescription is written and filled, what the realistic out-of-pocket exposure band is in AED, what to monitor on therapy, and how the longer-term treatment course fits into an Abu Dhabi family's life.

## Why Aptiom, and why now

Aptiom is eslicarbazepine acetate, a once-daily oral voltage-gated sodium channel blocker. The molecule is a prodrug rapidly hydrolysed after absorption to eslicarbazepine, the active S-enantiomer of the carbamazepine 10-monohydroxy metabolite. Developed by Bial (Portugal), commercialised internationally as Zebinix, licensed to Sunovion as Aptiom for the US market.

FDA: adult adjunctive November 2013, adult monotherapy September 2015, paediatric ages 4 and over September 2017. EMA approved Zebinix in April 2009.

For an Abu Dhabi-resident patient who has trialled levetiracetam or lamotrigine without adequate seizure control, or who is moving off carbamazepine because of hyponatraemia or unfavourable interactions, Aptiom is the operational answer: once-daily dosing, cleaner enzyme-induction profile, lower hyponatraemia incidence than oxcarbazepine.

## **What Aptiom is, in plain language**

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Oral tablet, once daily, with or without food. 200 mg, 400 mg, 600 mg, 800 mg strengths. Crushable. Room temperature storage. No infusion, no certified-centre requirement.

Adult titration: 400 mg week 1, 800 mg week 2 onwards, maintenance 800 to 1,600 mg/day. Paediatric (ages 4 to 17): weight-based, 20 to 30 mg/kg/day maintenance.

## **Eligibility at an Abu Dhabi neurology clinic**

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1. Confirmed partial-onset (focal) epilepsy diagnosed by neurologist or epileptologist with EEG and MRI brain documentation. 2. Age 4 or older for paediatric prescribing. 3. Treatment history demonstrating failure of an initial first-line antiepileptic or tolerability-driven need to move off carbamazepine or oxcarbazepine. 4. Baseline serum sodium and liver function tests. 5. Hormonal contraceptive review for women of reproductive potential. 6. Pregnancy and lactation screen. 7. Drug interaction screen. 8. Hepatic and renal function review. 9. HLA screening where clinically indicated.

An Abu Dhabi-resident patient should arrive with EEG report, MRI brain report, complete seizure history, prior antiepileptic-drug history, baseline labs, and insurance documentation (Thiqa for Emirati nationals; Daman or commercial cover for residents).

## **The Abu Dhabi prescribing and dispense picture, plainly**

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Zebinix registration status in the UAE is governed by EDE on the federal layer, with Abu Dhabi-emirate dispensing coordinated through DoH. [VERIFY: current EDE Zebinix registration status and DoH dispensing notes at point of dispense.] Where Zebinix is EDE-registered, in-country dispensing applies through DoH-licensed hospital and community pharmacies. Where a specific formulation extension has not yet been registered, a named-patient pathway can apply through DoH with EDE coordination, with cross-border procurement where applicable.

1. **Prescribing neurologist or epileptologist:** any DoH-licensed neurologist with epilepsy clinical experience. - **Adult:** Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi (comprehensive epilepsy programme with video-EEG, epilepsy surgery evaluation, and full AED formulary), SKMC neurology, SSMC neurology, Burjeel Medical City neurology, NMC Royal Hospital, Mediclinic Airport Road. Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi runs the deepest adult epilepsy programme in the emirate. - **Paediatric (ages 4 to 17):** SKMC paediatric neurology, Tawam Hospital paediatric neurology (Al Ain), Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi paediatric services, SSMC paediatric neurology. (Note: Sidra Medicine in Doha is paediatric-only and only applicable for cross-border Qatar referrals; Abu Dhabi paediatric epilepsy is served in-emirate.) 2. **Diagnostic workup:** EEG and MRI brain run at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, SKMC, SSMC, Burjeel, NMC, or partnered diagnostic centres. Video-EEG monitoring and epilepsy-protocol 3T MRI capacity exist at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's comprehensive epilepsy programme. Complex medication-refractory cases stay in-emirate or, where preferred, route to international referral. 3. **Insurance pre-authorisation:** for Emirati nationals, Thiqa pathway applies (with DoH + EDE coordination). For residents on Daman or commercial covers (AXA Gulf, NEXtCARE, MetLife, Cigna, Bupa Global, MSH, Allianz Care), AED cover at the maintenance dose tier is typically available; the specialty-tier price band for Zebinix means some commercial insurers require a clinical rationale letter documenting prior AED failure or intolerance. Pre-authorisation typically takes 5 to 14 days for a complete file. 4. **Pharmacy dispense:** DoH-licensed hospital and community pharmacies with AED inventory. Bial's MENA distributor network supplies Zebinix. 5. **Refill cycle:** monthly. Continued dispensing requires documentation of ongoing seizure-diary review and periodic serum sodium monitoring.

## The 2026 pathway, step by step

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Week 0 to 2: Documentation pack with treating neurologist's office at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, SKMC, SSMC, Burjeel Medical City, NMC Royal Hospital, Mediclinic Airport Road, or Tawam paediatric neurology. EEG report, MRI brain report, complete seizure history, prior AED history, baseline labs, insurance documentation.

Week 2 to 4: Insurance pre-authorisation review.

Week 4 to 5: First dispense. Starting dose 400 mg once daily for one week.

Week 5 to 6: Up-titration to 800 mg once daily.

Week 4 and month 3: Serum sodium checks documented.

Ongoing: Maintenance once daily, monthly refill, annual serum sodium check, periodic LFT monitoring, continuous seizure diary.

## Cost expectation in AED

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US Aptiom list price (2026) approximately USD 1,200 to USD 2,000 per 30-day supply; annual cost USD 14,000 to USD 24,000 at list price. International Zebinix supply through the UAE distributor channel generally lower.

At 2026 cross rates, a 30-day Aptiom supply at USD 1,500 is approximately AED 5,500, annual cost at USD 18,000 is approximately AED 66,000. Zebinix supply through the UAE channel typically lands in the AED 3,700 to 5,500 monthly band, with annual cost in the AED 41,000 to 66,000 band.

For Emirati nationals on Thiqa, AEDs at the maintenance dose tier are typically covered. Daman and commercial covers vary; out-of-pocket exposure for a covered Abu Dhabi resident is generally a co-payment band, not the full list price.

## Monitoring on therapy

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- **Serum sodium:** baseline, one month, three months, then annually if stable. - **Liver function tests:** baseline and periodically. - **Seizure diary:** continuous patient-side documentation. - **Skin review:** immediate medical review for any new rash. - **Alcohol caution:** counselling at first prescription. - **Driving caution:** Abu Dhabi traffic regulations for patients with active epilepsy require a seizure-free interval. - **Bone health:** Vitamin D supplementation and bone health monitoring appropriate for long-term enzyme-inducing AED therapy.

## Religious, ethical, and family-logistics framing

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Aptiom is an oral small molecule with no animal-source material. Halal acceptability is not in question. The classical Islamic jurisprudential framework for chronic medication endorses antiepileptic therapy.

Once-daily dosing is the operational advantage over twice-daily carbamazepine and oxcarbazepine.

Epilepsy carries a heavier social stigma in some Emirati and expatriate family contexts than in many Western settings, particularly for unmarried adolescent and young adult patients where the diagnosis can affect marriage prospects. The medical record is confidential. Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, SKMC, SSMC, and the major Abu Dhabi neurology services handle this with discretion as standard practice.

For paediatric patients at SKMC, Tawam, or Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi (ages 4 to 17), parental involvement in the medication-administration routine is standard. Once-daily simplifies school-day logistics.

For women of reproductive potential, the hormonal contraceptive interaction is a real conversation. Barrier or non-hormonal contraception is the standard recommendation.

## When Aptiom is not the right call

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Not appropriate for primary generalised epilepsies, severe hyponatraemia history, Stevens-Johnson syndrome or toxic epidermal necrolysis history on a dibenzazepine, severe hepatic impairment (Child-Pugh C), pregnant women without specialist counsel, or HLA-A\*3101 positive patients where clinically indicated.

Alternatives in 2026: levetiracetam, lamotrigine, carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, lacosamide, brivaracetam, perampanel, surgical evaluation at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's comprehensive epilepsy programme for medication-refractory cases.

Reserve Meds does not push a default. The page describes the Aptiom pathway because Aptiom is the antiepileptic the patient has asked about.

## What Reserve Meds does on this case

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We are a US-based concierge coordinator. We are not the prescriber and not the dispensing pharmacy. On an Abu Dhabi Aptiom case we build the documentation pack, confirm EDE registration status and the appropriate DoH dispensing pathway, coordinate the insurance pre-authorisation conversation (Thiqa routing for Emirati nationals; Daman and commercial pre-auth for residents), set up the first 30-day dispense at a DoH-licensed pharmacy, organise the serum sodium monitoring schedule, and stay with the case through the first year. Clinical decisions remain with your treating neurologist.

### *Reserve Meds's role*

US-based concierge coordinator for cross-border specialty medicine. We are not the prescriber, not the dispensing pharmacy, and not the manufacturer. All clinical decisions remain with your treating physician.

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### **Reserve Meds**

*reserved for you.*

Composite case examples. This document is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your treating physician.

Reserve Meds is in pre-launch. Published timelines and cost ranges are indicative, not guarantees.

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