

## Aptiom

Dubai · access guide

# How to access Aptiom for partial-onset (focal) epilepsy from Dubai: 2026 pathway via DHA neurology services and community pharmacy supply

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

Dubai's adult and paediatric neurology footprint runs across American Hospital Dubai neurology, Mediclinic City Hospital and Mediclinic Parkview neurology, King's College Hospital London Dubai, Saudi German Hospital Dubai, NMC Specialty Hospital, the Dr Sulaiman Al Habib network, the Aster network, and Neuropedia (paediatric neuroscience). Dubai-emirate pharmaceutical regulation is coordinated through the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) Pharmaceutical Affairs Department, 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 a Dubai-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 DHA + EDE coordination, what the insurance pre-authorisation conversation looks like under DHA-regulated employer plans and commercial cover, and how the monthly refill cycle and serum sodium monitoring schedule settle into a Dubai family's life.

This page explains how the pathway works in 2026 for a Dubai-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 a Dubai 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 a Dubai-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 a Dubai 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.

A Dubai-resident patient should arrive with EEG report, MRI brain report, complete seizure history, prior antiepileptic-drug history, baseline labs, and insurance documentation (DHA-regulated employer plan or commercial cover for residents; Saada/Enaya pathway for Emirati nationals).

## **The Dubai prescribing and dispense picture, plainly**

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

1. **Prescribing neurologist or epileptologist:** any DHA-licensed neurologist with epilepsy clinical experience. Major Dubai neurology services include American Hospital Dubai neurology, Mediclinic City Hospital neurology and Mediclinic Parkview neurology, King's College Hospital London Dubai, Saudi German Hospital Dubai, NMC Specialty Hospital, the Dr Sulaiman Al Habib network, and the Aster network. Paediatric epilepsy services concentrate at Mediclinic City Hospital paediatric neurology, American Hospital Dubai paediatric services, and Neuropedia (the Dubai paediatric neuroscience specialty centre). For complex medication-refractory adult or paediatric cases requiring extended video-EEG monitoring or epilepsy surgery evaluation, cross-emirate referral to Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's comprehensive epilepsy programme is the standard pattern; international referral to KFSHRC Riyadh or HMC Doha is an alternative. 2. **Diagnostic workup:** EEG and MRI brain run at American Hospital Dubai, Mediclinic City, King's College London Dubai, Saudi German Hospital Dubai, NMC Specialty, or partnered diagnostic centres. Standard EEG is widely available; video-EEG monitoring capacity exists at Mediclinic City and American Hospital Dubai. Comprehensive epilepsy-surgery evaluation routes through Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi. 3. **Insurance pre-authorisation:** for Emirati nationals, Saada or Enaya pathway applies (with DHA + EDE coordination). For residents on DHA-regulated employer plans (NEXtCARE, MetLife, Daman, AXA Gulf, Bupa Global, Cigna, 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:** DHA-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 American Hospital Dubai, Mediclinic City, King's College London Dubai, Saudi German Hospital Dubai, Dr Sulaiman Al Habib, NMC, Aster, or the chosen Dubai neurology service. 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 Saada or Enaya, AEDs at the maintenance dose tier are typically covered. Commercial covers vary; out-of-pocket exposure for a covered Dubai 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:** UAE/Dubai RTA 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. Particularly relevant for Dubai's mobile, schedule-busy professional and student populations.

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. The medical record is confidential. Dubai neurology services handle this with discretion as standard practice.

For paediatric patients (ages 4 to 17), parental involvement in the medication-administration routine is standard. Once-daily simplifies school-day logistics, including for boarding-school students at the international schools.

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, perampnel, surgical evaluation (cross-emirate referral to Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi for medication-refractory cases; international referral to KFSHRC Riyadh or HMC Doha as alternative).

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 a Dubai Aptiom case we build the documentation pack, confirm EDE registration status and the appropriate DHA dispensing pathway, coordinate the insurance pre-authorisation conversation (Saada/Enaya routing for Emirati nationals; employer-plan and commercial pre-auth for residents), set up the first 30-day dispense at a DHA-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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