

Medicines Factsheet

Information on medicines supply for patients



Your local pharmacy team is working hard to make sure you get the medicines you need, when you need them, but we – like many other pharmacies – sometimes experience difficulties in sourcing medicines.

We know how important getting your medicines is and our team are always happy to talk to you about your medicines and to explain why getting your medicine may be difficult for us at the moment, and what that will mean for your treatment.

Why can I not be given my prescribed medicine today?

Unfortunately, the pharmacy does not have all or some of the medicine you need in stock today. The pharmacy team will talk to you about what this means – they may be able to give you some of the medicines you need but not to fulfil all of your prescription just yet; or they might be trying to order your medicine in as soon as possible; or they may need to speak to your GP about getting an alternative medicine prescribed.

Why is my medicine not in stock?

There are many reasons why pharmacies are not always able to obtain certain medicines. Shortages of medicines can happen, for example, where medicines manufacturers have problems making or transporting medicines or their ingredients; where more people are suddenly prescribed a medicine, which uses up supply; or where there are pricing concerns about medicines.



In recent years we have seen an increase in shortage problems for a combination of these reasons, and pharmacies are already having to spend a lot of time trying to source medicines for their patients. Factors such as Brexit planning and contingency may be adding to the ongoing issues.

The community pharmacy sector is working with Government and others on plans to ensure that the supply of medicines and medical devices is maintained after the UK exits the EU, including in a no-deal scenario. Patients and healthcare professionals have been asked by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to order medicines as they usually would – DHSC says that you do not need to order any more medicines than you need, and you should keep taking the medicines you have as they have been prescribed.

I can't get my medicine from you (my usual pharmacy) but another pharmacy has it – why is that?

There are a number of reasons why some pharmacies may have different medicines available:

- Different pharmacies use different suppliers so availability will depend on whether each pharmacy's suppliers have stock or not.
- Where there is a known shortage of a medicine supply levels can change quickly and can vary regionally – so while pharmacies in one area may be able to find a medicine; others may not.
- Some manufacturers and suppliers restrict the amount of a specific medicine that a pharmacy can order. This is known as a quota. Once a pharmacy has used their quota for the month it can be difficult for them to get any more of that medicine until the start of the next month.

What is the difference between branded medicines and generics?

Medicines will often have more than one name:

- A **generic name** which is the ingredient of the active medicine (for example ibuprofen). Often generic medicines are made by a number of different medicines manufacturers.
- A **brand** is the name the manufacturer or pharmaceutical company gives to the medicine (for example Nurofen). Only that manufacturer can make that brand.



If your doctor prescribes by brand name, the law says that we have to supply that brand, which can cause delays if there is a problem with it. If your doctor prescribes using a generic name, we can supply any available product which matches that drug description.

Why are my new tablets a different size, shape or colour?

Because some medicines are in short supply, your usual tablets may not be available. In this case, to make sure you don't go without your regular medication we may be able to supply you with the same medicine but from a different manufacturer (i.e. a generic medicine). This means that your tablets may look different, but they will still contain the active ingredient(s) that your doctor prescribed. If you have any queries about your medicines, you can ask to speak to the pharmacist.

What are you doing to help?

The ongoing medicines shortages mean that quite a number of suppliers don't have stock available, but we are working hard to try to find the right medicines for you and for all our patients. Things that we may be doing for you include:

- 'Staged' dispensing or owings – this is where we may only give you some of your medicines and we will ask you to come back to collect the rest of the prescription later.
- Liaising with GPs to find alternative medicines that may be suitable for you.
- Making many phone calls to different suppliers to try to find the medicine you need.
- Seeing if stock may be available in other local pharmacies.

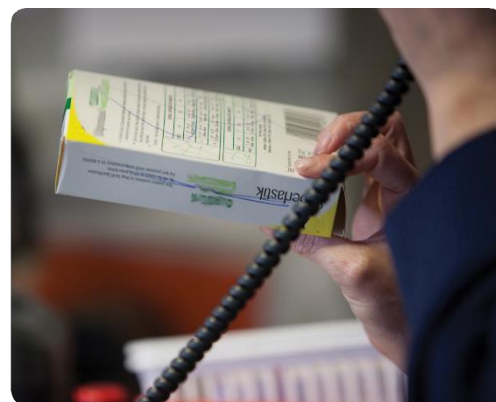
Drug shortages are a national problem and the national pharmacy representative bodies are working with the Government and the Department of Health and Social Care to help resolve these problems.

What can patients do to help?

There are a few things that you can do to help:

- Order any medicines that you need from us in good time (but no more than seven days before it is due).
- Only order medicines that you need. If you have unused medicines in your cupboard, please use these first (remember to check the expiry date) and please do not order extra medicines.

The Government has asked people not to order extra medicines in the run up to Brexit. They have also asked suppliers and pharmacists not to stockpile medicines and GPs not to prescribe more medicines than they usually would. This is because overprescribing, ordering or stockpiling medicines can contribute to the problems and create medicine shortages for others.



We are working hard to try to source affected medicines so please bear with us if we are having difficulty getting the medicines for you.