

1. Medicines Supply: Current Situation

- Medicines supply is complex, variable and impacted by many factors. Community pharmacy teams have been struggling for some time to source certain medicines. In some cases, availability is an issue. In other cases, medicines are available but at significantly inflated prices.
- GP practices are spending a lot of time having to amend and re-issue prescriptions, often not knowing if the alternative is available.
- Prescribing budgets are under a lot of pressure as prices of medicines increase.

2. How We Can Work Together

Community Pharmacy:

- Inform prescribers of potential alternatives that are available (use the local formulary pages to help you identify first and second line choices for your area).
- Ask your local GP practices for a direct phone number or their preferred method of contact for a quick response.
- Liaise with nearby pharmacies to direct patients to a pharmacy that has stock.
- Make use of the current [Serious Shortage Protocols](#).
- Consider “staged dispensing”, giving some of the medicine and asking patients to call back at a later date to collect the rest.
- Use the available [Patient Information Leaflet](#) to explain the changes to patients.
- Shortages can lead to inflated prices. Report pricing concerns to [Community Pharmacy England](#).

GP Practices:

- Prescribe generically where appropriate as this allows pharmacies to dispense any brand that is available. A limited number of products should always be branded (Please check with your pharmacy team if unsure whether an item can be generically prescribed).
- Prescribers are requested to resist writing prescriptions for longer periods of time as this could exacerbate issues.
- Provide pharmacies with an easy way to contact the practice to request alternative prescriptions. This may be a direct number, specific website or rapid-response secure email.
- Use the available [Patient Information Leaflet](#) to explain the changes to patients.
- Consider allowing 7 days before a prescription runs out in order to give some additional time for stock location, communication of any issues. Encourage patients to avoid ordering items they do not need that month.
- Check for known, enduring national supply issues in the [Medicines Supply Tool](#). More localised and/or short term shortages are also occurring commonly.
- If the pharmacy advises they need to obtain ‘imported’ or ‘special order’ formulations of a drug, the words ‘Imported’ or ‘Special Order’ description MUST appear in the first line as part of the drug name field. If written anywhere else on the prescription form, NHSBSA will not reimburse the pharmacy correctly.

Useful Links:



[Community Pharmacy England Serious Shortage Protocols](#)

Allows pharmacists to switch certain products without referring patients back to the prescriber.



[Specialist Pharmacy Service Medicines Supply Tool](#)

List of known, enduring shortages - does not cover all short term problems (anyone with nhs.net email can [register](#))



[Community Pharmacy England Medicines Fact Sheet – Information on Medicines Supply for Patients](#)



[NHS Service Finder](#)

For health and care professionals - accurate, real-time information to help signpost patients to available services. Includes non-public contact details.