

Information on medicines supply for patients

Currently, there are problems sourcing some medicines across the UK, this may be worrying some patients.

Community pharmacies and GP practices are working hard to try and make sure you get the medicines you need but are experiencing difficulties in sourcing some medicines. It is a national problem, and the Department of Health is closely involved.

Reasons for medicine supply issues

Shortages of medicines can occur for many different reasons, for example:

- Manufacturers of medicines can have problems with making the medicine, transporting the medicines, or have problems with ingredients for medicines.
- Sometimes there is an increased demand; when lots of people are suddenly prescribed a medicine this can use up the available supply in the short term.

Supply can vary between community pharmacies because,

- Different pharmacies may use different suppliers or wholesalers and it will depend on whether the supplier has stock or not; and
- 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 really hard to get any more until the start of the next month.

Brand and Generic medicines (the difference)

A **generic** name is the ingredient of the medicine, for example, ibuprofen. Often generic medicines are made by a number of manufacturers.

A **brand** is the name the manufacturer or pharmaceutical company gives to the medicine, such as, Nurofen (ibuprofen). Only one manufacturer can make that particular brand.

If your doctor prescribes by brand name, the pharmacist will supply that particular brand. If your doctor prescribes using a generic name, the pharmacist can supply from all the available products which match that medicine name.

Because some medicines are in short supply, your usual tablets may not be readily available. If this happens, your pharmacist may supply you with the same medicine but from a different manufacturer, so your tablets may look slightly different to what you are used to. If you are not sure, please speak to your pharmacist.

Recommendations for patients

- Order your medication in plenty of time (but no more than seven days before it is due)
- Only order what you need. If you have unused medicines in your cupboard, please use these first (check the expiry date)
- If your usual pharmacy is unable to obtain supplies, try a different pharmacy.

Your pharmacy is trying hard to source affected medicines, so please bear with them until the situation is resolved.