



Dispensing and Supply Factsheet: Information on medicines supply for patients



Your local pharmacy team works hard to make sure that you get the medicines that you need, but we – like many other pharmacies across the country – sometimes experience difficulties in sourcing medicines.

We know how important getting your medicines is and I'd be happy to tell you more about why getting your medicine may be difficult for us at the moment.

Why is my medicine out of stock?

If manufacturers suffer problems in making medicines, or if more patients in an area are put onto a certain medicine, then shortages can occur. Also, recent changes in the exchange rates means that stock sold to pharmacies in the UK may now be being sold in other countries meaning there is less stock available.

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

There are two main reasons for this:

1. Different pharmacies use different suppliers and it will depend on whether they have stock or not.
2. Some manufacturers 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.

What is the difference between brands and generics?

Medicines will often have more than one name:

- A generic name which 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 (for example Nurofen). Only that manufacturer can make that brand.

If your doctor prescribes by brand name, the law says we have to supply that brand, which can cause delays. 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 medication we may supply you with the same medicine but from a different manufacturer, so your tablets may change their appearance. If you have any queries, you can ask to speak to the pharmacist.

What are you doing to help?

The scale of the medicines shortages means that lots of suppliers don't have stock available, but we are trying really hard to find stock for you and all our patients. This includes "staged" dispensing, liaising with GPs to find alternatives, many phone calls to suppliers, seeing if stock may be available in other pharmacies, and more. This is a national problem and pharmacy representatives are working with the Government to help resolve these problems.

What can I (the patient) do to help?

There are a few things you could do:

- Order your medication in plenty of time (but no more than seven days before it is due).
- Only order what you require. If you have unused medicines in your cupboard use these first (remember to check the expiry date).

We are trying really hard to source these items so please bear with us if we are having difficulty getting medicines for you.

