

NHS MEDICINES SUPPLY ISSUES

Community Pharmacies are working really hard to make sure that you get the medicines that you need. At the moment there are a lot of difficulties sourcing medicines and this is leading to some problems. We know how important getting your medicines is (recently 2.2m people signed a petition to support their local pharmacies) so we wanted to provide you with some information about why getting your medicine may be difficult.

6 KEY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. Why is my medicine out of stock?

Recently two manufacturers have had problems making their medicines which means that they cannot be sold. Some medicines are now in short-supply. 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.

2. I can't get my medicine from my usual pharmacy but another pharmacy has it – why is that?

There are two main reasons for this:

- Different pharmacies use different suppliers and it will depend on whether their wholesalers have stock or not.
- 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.

3. 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. If your doctor prescribes using a generic name we can supply any manufacturer's generic product.

4. Why are my new tablets a different size, shape and 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 your pharmacist may supply you with the same medicine but from a different manufacturer so your tablets may change their appearance. If you have any queries, talk to your pharmacist.

5. What is my pharmacy doing to help?

Most pharmacies have several wholesaler accounts. The scale of the medicines shortages means that lots of wholesalers don't have stock available. Pharmacies are trying really hard to find stock for their patients. This includes seeing if stock may be available for you in other pharmacies. This is a national problem and pharmacy representatives are working with the Government to help resolve these problems.

6. What can I do to help?

- 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).
- Your pharmacist is trying really hard to source these items so please bear with them if they are having difficulty getting medicines for you.

Remember you can always ask your pharmacist if you have any questions about your medicines.

Many community pharmacies are open six days a week but during the Christmas and New Year season opening times may vary so please check on NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk)

You have the right to collect medicines that have been prescribed for you from any pharmacy you choose. Your choice should not be influenced by letters you receive in the post, or by any doctor or pharmacist.