

Key issues:

- **Working together with understanding and good communication will help minimise the impact of medicines shortages for patients, pharmacies and GP practices.**
- Medicines supply issues are a growing national problem and affect all sectors of the ICS (Integrated Care System) leading to frustration and concern for patients.
- Shortages are caused by factors such as manufacturing problems and global market share.
- GP practices spend time changing prescriptions, often without knowing what else is available.
- Pharmacies are spending a lot of time sourcing medicines, sometimes by having to contact multiple wholesalers. Stock situations changes rapidly, sometimes within hours.
- Prescribing budgets are under pressure as prices of medicines increase.

Advice for all

- Use patient information leaflet to explain shortages - [PIL](#).
- Clinicians should establish the urgency & whether patients have any supplies at home
- If there is a medicines supply notification, follow the actions listed at the end of the document for advice & alternatives

Community Pharmacy (CP):

- Inform prescribers of alternatives & serious shortage protocols that are available. (see below)
- Ask the GP practice for a direct phone number to avoid using patient lines &/or arrange a set time of day when a prescriber can be available for queries.
- If there is no stock, send the prescription back to the spine so patient can take to another pharmacy. If possible, liaise with nearby pharmacies to signpost patients to a pharmacy that has stock.
- Consider “staged” dispensing, i.e. partial supply & ask patient to collect the rest at a later date.
- Limited availability can lead to significantly inflated prices. Report pricing concerns to [CPE](#).

GP Practices:

- Prescribe generically **where appropriate** to allow pharmacies to dispense any available brand.
- When a medicine is in short supply consider 28-day prescribing (even if 56 days is routine)
- Work with the [PCN community pharmacy lead](#) to share key messages.
- Where possible share direct line numbers where individual patient’s problems can be discussed without delay
- Allow 7 days before a prescription may run out to order give time for processing & stock location.
- Where a medication is known to be in short supply – try to ensure the item goes on a separate script & with a token for **any** pharmacy to pull the script down from the spine

Healthcare Professional (HCP) Information

1. [HWE clinical guidance website](#) can help you to identify first line and second line medicine choices.
2. [SPS Medicines supply tool](#)
List of known, enduring shortages – does not cover all short term problems. Anyone with [nhs.net](#) email can [register](#)
3. [Community Pharmacy England Serious Shortage Protocols](#)
Allows pharmacists to switch certain products without referring patients back to the prescriber
4. [Serious Shortage Protocols](#). Provides guidance for HCP on managing serious shortages
5. [CPE Medicines Factsheet - Information on medicines supply for patients](#) Patient Information

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