

## Medicine shortages- information for patients

Medicine shortages can happen for a variety of reasons. Manufacturers may have problems sourcing ingredients or making or transporting the medicines. Sometimes a sudden increase in demand can also lead to a shortage.

### Here are a few things you can do to help:

- Check what medicines you have at home just in case you have some already.
- Order your medicines in good time (5-7 days before you are due to run out of them).
- Only order the medicines you need. If you have unused medicines at home, use those first (make sure to check the expiry date).
- Your practice can issue the item on a single prescription, allowing you to try another pharmacy without disrupting the supply of your other medicines.
- If your usual pharmacy is out of a particular medicine, try another pharmacy before asking your doctor for an alternative. Different pharmacies use different wholesalers so stock may vary.
- If your usual pharmacy does not have the medicine in stock but another one does, you may ask for your prescription to be returned to the system (this is where the pharmacy returns the prescription to the “NHS Spine”, which makes it available for another pharmacy).
- If no pharmacy has the medicine that you have been prescribed, ask the pharmacy what alternatives are available, so you can share that information with your GP practice.

By following these tips, you can help to ensure that you have access to the medicines you need when you need them.

### To help reduce the impact of medicine shortages you should:

- Ask your GP practice whether there are alternative medicines you can take.
- Be prepared to wait for your medicine if there is a shortage. The pharmacy may be able to supply some of your medicine and contact you when the remainder becomes available.
- Be understanding if your pharmacy is unable to fill your prescription right away. Your pharmacy team works very hard to obtain medicines during times of shortages.

### Is there anything else I should know?

In some circumstances community pharmacies can supply an alternative medicine without going back to the prescriber. This is subject to written national guidance which names the alternative medicine allowed to be dispensed and may limit the quantity to be supplied. The named alternative medicine may not be suitable for all patients. Where a pharmacy supplies a medicine in this way, you will be made aware of this.