

Working Together to Minimise the Impact of Medicines Shortages

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) and lead to frustration and concern for patients.
- Shortages are caused by factors such as manufacturing problems and global market share.
- Pharmacies are spending a lot of time sourcing medicines, sometimes by having to contact multiple wholesalers. Not always easy as the stock situation changes rapidly, sometimes within hours.
- GP practices spend a lot of time having to change prescriptions, often without knowing what alternatives are available.
- Prescribing budgets are under pressure as prices of medicines increase.

Community Pharmacy:

- Inform prescribers of potential alternatives that are available. The [Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary](#) can help you to identify first line and second line medicine choices.
- Ask the GP practice for an alternative phone number to avoid using patient lines and/or arrange a set time of day when a prescriber can be available for queries.
- Liaise with nearby pharmacies to direct patients to a pharmacy that has stock.
- Make use of current [Serious Shortage Protocols](#).
- Consider “staged” dispensing, give some of the medicines and ask patient to collect the rest at a later date.
- Use patient information leaflet to explain shortages - [here](#).
- Limited availability can lead to significantly inflated prices. Report pricing concerns to [Community Pharmacy England](#).

GP Practices:

- Prescribe generically **where appropriate** (see [preferred prescribing list](#)), this allows pharmacies to dispense any brand that is available.
- 28 day prescribing whenever possible - prescribing for longer periods can exacerbate supply issues.
- Arrange a set time of day when local community pharmacy can bring issues and/or give them an alternative phone number to avoid using patient lines. Review changes to prescriptions when stocks are available again.
- Act on OptimiseRx point-of-prescribing shortage messages (these messages are kept up to date).
- Use patient information leaflet to explain shortages - [here](#).
- Issuing prescriptions - Consider allowing 7 days before a prescription is due to run out in order give time for processing and stock location. Note that the [NHS Delivery Plan](#) encourages pharmacies to use “hub and spoke” models to help manage their workload which can add to lead times.

Healthcare Professional (HCP) Information



[Specialist Pharmacy Service Medicines Supply Tool](#)

List of known, enduring shortages - does not cover all short term problems (anyone with nhs.net email can [register](#))



[Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary](#)

Useful to identify formulary alternatives



[Community Pharmacy England Serious Shortage Protocols](#)

Allows pharmacists to switch certain products without referring patients back to the prescriber.



[NHS Service Finder](#)

For health and care professionals - accurate, real-time information to help signpost patients to available services. Includes non-public contact details.



Patient Information

[Community Pharmacy England Medicines Factsheet - Information on medicines supply for patients](#)