

Medicines shortage guidance

There is a contractual requirement for medicines and appliances ordered on NHS prescriptions to be dispensed with reasonable promptness by community pharmacies. However, shortages of medicines are a frequent issue that can hinder pharmacy teams efforts to dispense medicines in a timely manner. This impacts on pharmacy team workload, local professional relationships, and patients.

Staff working in primary care (both in general practice and community pharmacy) are often working under considerable pressure and we are aware that liaison between the two teams in relation to out of stock medicines can cause operational difficulties with patient care, and frustration for all parties.

If a prescribed medicine is out of stock, pharmacy teams should ensure all options to help the patient get their treatment have been considered before contacting the prescriber. NHS England SW have issued [guidance \(June 2018\)](#).

Check if you can follow a [Serious Shortage Protocol \(SSP\)](#).

If the prescribing practice is contacted to discuss an alternative, let practice staff know when the item prescribed will be back in stock and which potential alternatives are in stock to avoid having to go through the process twice.

[Notify](#) Community Pharmacy England if you are struggling to obtain products for less than or at the Drug Tariff price, so that they can negotiate a price concession with the Department of Health & Social Care.