

Will my pharmacist be able to tell me when my medicine is back in stock?

All advice provided by the government and NHS is regularly reviewed and kept up to date on an online Medicine Supply Tool which NHS doctors and pharmacists can access, including when your medicine is expected back in stock.

What is the government doing to tackle medication shortages?

Medicine suppliers are legally required to report any medicine shortages to the government in good time. When notified of a potential shortage there are well established processes in place to ensure that the risk to patients is minimised, including working closely with medicine suppliers, NHS England, the medicines regulator and others working in the medicine supply chain.

I still have questions about my medicines shortage and the impact it might have on my health, what should I do?

Speak to your pharmacist or doctor or contact NHS 111.

Recommended actions in a medicines shortage



Order your medicine or repeat prescription in advance, ideally while you still have medication, so your pharmacist can source your medicine in good time.



Talk to your pharmacist in the first instance, and as early as possible



Avoid stockpiling and ordering more than you need until your next prescription.

Advice for patients during a medicines shortage



We know how difficult and stressful medicines supply issues can be for patients and carers.

This brochure is intended to support patients in England to get the information and treatment they need in the event of a shortage.

Why do medicines shortages happen?

Pharmacies in England dispense billions of prescription items each year and the majority are supplied without problems.

However, occasionally your local pharmacy may not have the medicine you need or may not have enough of it. Usually, this temporary disruption will be resolved quickly, and patients are able to get the medicine as soon as the pharmacy receives the next daily delivery.

Supply issues can happen for a number of reasons, but are usually due to shortages of ingredients needed to make medicines, sudden spikes in demand for treatments, issues with manufacturing capacity, or unexpected global events.

The government works with medicine suppliers and the NHS to manage national supply issues where there is a shortage of a medicine across the whole country, and ensure that shortages have as little impact on patients as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What will my pharmacy or GP do if my medication isn't available because of a national shortage?

You might:

- Be asked to go to another pharmacy to collect your medicine
- Receive a different formulation of your medicine, e.g., a tablet instead of a capsule
- Receive a smaller quantity of your medicine so you will need to collect more frequently
- Be asked to go back to your GP for a new prescription for an available medicine, if this cannot be organised by the pharmacy and GP over the phone

My pharmacy has told me that they can't get my medicine, but another pharmacy might be able to. Why is there a difference between pharmacies?

Pharmacies may have different medicines because they get them from different suppliers. Sometimes, if a medicine

is in limited supply, pharmacies cannot order more until the next month. This means there may be a limit (quota) on the quantity of medicines pharmacies can order each month, but another pharmacy still has it in stock.

Can my current pharmacy tell me what is available at another local pharmacy?

Pharmacies that are not in the same company do not share the same computer system and cannot look at each other's stock levels. There is a website for healthcare professionals that contains a list of all national medicines shortages. They may be able to help by asking nearby pharmacies if they have your medicine in stock.

What should I do if an alternative type of medication is not helping my symptoms or causing new side effects?

Go back to your doctor and/or discuss with your pharmacist.

What if there is no alternative to the medicine I need?

In rare cases, there might be no suitable alternative medicine available. If this happens, your doctor or pharmacist will explain what the next steps are for you.