



Managing medicines shortages in Wales

Information for patients



Written by the **All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre**. It is an easy read version of 'Managing medicines shortages in Wales - patient information leaflet'.

How to use this booklet



This is an easy read booklet. But you may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. We have explained what they mean after each hard word.



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What are medicines shortages?



In Wales, over 80 million **prescriptions** are given out every year.



A **prescription** is a written note for the medicine you need to take. **Prescriptions** are often given to you by a doctor. But other healthcare workers like some nurses, dentists and pharmacists can also do this.



Sometimes, there are medicines shortages.



When there is a shortage, it might be hard for you to get your medicine. This can feel worrying or upsetting.



We know how important it is for you to get your medicines.



There are many people who work hard to stop shortages from affecting you.



Most medicines shortages do not cause problems for patients.

Why do medicines shortages happen?

Medicines shortages can happen for different reasons, like:



- More people need the medicine than expected.



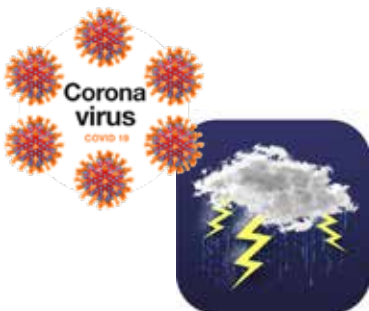
- Problems making the medicine.



- Problems with delivery or transport.



- The company stops making the medicine.



- Sometimes, big events or disasters happen that no one could expect.

What happens if there are medicines shortages?



If there are medicines shortages, the Welsh Government and NHS work with:

- The Medicines Shortage Advisory Group Wales
- The UK Government
- The companies that make and supply medicines



They work hard to make sure shortages do not stop people from getting their medicines.



If a medicines shortage might cause problems, the Welsh Government gives advice to healthcare workers about:

- How long the shortage might last.
- Other types of the same medicine that are still available.
- Other medicines that can treat the same condition.

Important information

What if my medicine is in short supply?

If your medicine is in short supply, these things might happen:



- You may need to wait a bit longer to get your medicine.



- You might be asked to go to a different pharmacy.



- You might get a smaller amount of your medicine. You may need to collect it more often.



- Your medicine might come in a different container.



- You might be **prescribed** a different medicine.



- Your pharmacy might give you a different medicine.



Your healthcare worker will need to talk to you about any change to your medicine. To make sure it is the best choice for you.



If you are given a different medicine:

- You will be told how to take it.
- And how long you might need to use it.



Often, you can go back to your usual medicine when the shortage is over.



Sometimes, you may need to stay on the new medicine.



If you are not sure about your medicine, ask your:

- Pharmacist
- Doctor
- Dentist
- Nurse
- Healthcare worker



Sometimes there may not be another suitable medicine available. This is very rare. If this happens, your healthcare worker will explain what happens next.

Who can I ask about the supply of my medicines?



If you have questions about the supply of your medicines, you can ask your:

- Pharmacist
- Doctor
- Dentist
- Nurse
- Healthcare worker



They will give you the best advice for your situation.



If your medicine is prescribed by a specialist, like a hospital consultant, they might be contacted.

How can I help with medicines shortages?



We can all help by doing these things:



- Only order the medicines you need. Do not store extra medicines.



- Order your medicines early. They might take longer to arrive than usual.



- Check the expiry dates of your medicines often. They might have a shorter date than usual.



- Take your medicines as directed by your healthcare worker. Do not change how much you take unless your healthcare worker advises you to.