



Community Pharmacy & Medicine Supply Issues

Stock issues continue to cause disruption to the medicines supply chain in primary care. The most common reasons for this disruption are widespread unavailability and unsustainable price increases.

Out of stock medicines are frequently attributed to global influences. This situation is further complicated as different pharmacies use different wholesalers, may have supplies restricted via quota mechanisms and operate different buying policies. Therefore, when an item shows as in stock online at a wholesaler, this does not always mean a pharmacy is able to procure the item.

Price increases - the NHS pricing system is designed to accommodate some discrepancies between the price paid for medicines and the amount reimbursed. However, the system doesn't account for all the drugs affected or always cover the full price difference. This continues to cause significant financial concern for pharmacies. One example is Aripiprazole 10mg tablets, where in November 2022 pharmacies were paying as much as £57 for the item but were only reimbursed £1.44 by the NHS and no concession was granted.

The issues are national and complex, so it is difficult to find a "one size fits all" solution to the problem. Please continue to communicate and support each other as pro-actively as possible to minimise patient disruption.

*The step-by-step guide below sets out the process for **both** pharmacies and prescribers to consider in the case of stock or significant price issues. Due to the number of variables at play it is not intended as a solution in all circumstances but may be a useful tool to ensure each occurrence is dealt with as appropriately as possible.*

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO ADDRESSING MEDICINE SUPPLY ISSUES

GREEN – Pharmacies **BLUE** – Prescribing Practices & Pharmacies

1. CHECK

- Check with your wholesalers & directly with suppliers to see if stock is available or there is a due date.
- Check SPS medicines supply tool for shortages & further information <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/>
- Check for any current serious shortage protocols (SSPs) which may allow alternatives without returning to the prescriber.

2. REPORT

- Out of stocks AND price issues must be reported to CPE via reporting tool <https://cpe.org.uk/dispensing-and-supply/supply-chain/medicine-shortages/>

3. OPTIONS

- Where appropriate (e.g. out of stocks) the patient may be directed to another pharmacy who has stock. Please confirm with the pharmacy that they have stock. Use the whatsapp/Signal group where available.
- Return the EPS token to spine and provide patient with a token number/ barcode (return paper FP10 to patient). If part dispensing prevents this, continue to step 4.
- Consider the alternatives that are in stock - different strengths, formulations, alternative drugs so you can suggest viable options to a prescriber.

4. CONTACT PRESCRIBER

- Complete the Out of Stock template https://cptv.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/109/2023/08/Stock_Shortages_email_template.docx
- Contact the practice (email, phone - agree with the practice preferred route).
- Agree who will advise the patient of any changes. In most cases this will be the pharmacy unless there are clinical reasons to prevent this.

5. NEXT STEPS

- Prescriber to issue the alternative prescription. In the case of repeat medication this will usually be as a one-off change or until further notice.

6. NO ALTERNATIVES?

- In the case of an out of stock this may require a wider patient review or referral back to the practice.

Further information & support can be found at:

- CPE Price concession fact sheet <https://cpe.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Price-concession-briefing-August-2022.pdf>
- Price concession webinar <https://cpe.org.uk/our-news/price-concessions-webinar-now-available-on-demand/>
- Patient factsheet – medicine supply <https://cpe.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/PSNC-Medicines-Supply-Information-Leaflet-July-2022.pdf>
- Local Pharmaceutical Committee office@cptv.org.uk