

National Supply Issues of Medicines for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Information for Current Patients and Carers.

There is a national supply problem affecting some medicines used to help manage symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). This is a UK wide issue which is affecting all services across the country and pharmacies in both the community and in hospitals. While every effort will be made by your healthcare professionals to ensure a timely supply of your medication, there may be a need for your normal medicine(s) to be changed or temporarily stopped due to the ongoing supply problems.

Why is there a shortage?

The supply shortage of these medicines is caused by manufacturing issues and also an increased global demand (increased prescribing of ADHD medication).

How long will the shortage last?

The medicines are expected back in stock at different dates between now and mid-2024. These dates are indicative only and are subject to change.

What medicines are affected?

- Some methylphenidate prolonged-release capsules and tablets (brand names: Concerta® XL, Equasym® XL, Xaggitin® XL and Xenidate® XL)
- Lisdexamfetamine (brand name: Elvanse®) capsules
- Guanfacine (brand name: Intuniv®) prolonged-release tablets

Are there alternative medicines available?

For methylphenidate other brands and/or strengths may be available which could be prescribed for the duration of supply disruption. For both lisdexamfetamine and guanfacine, there is no direct licensed alternative available.

What should I do if I cannot get my ADHD prescription from the pharmacy?

Your community pharmacy and GP practice will work together to support you during this period of medicine shortages. The availability of stock is a live situation, and is changeable, so what the help looks like will depend both on the medication you require and the timing of your request.

As this is a UK wide issue, all community pharmacies are experiencing the same difficulties in getting supplies. As such you should not contact multiple pharmacies relating to medicine supplies.

Where a suitable alternative ADHD medicine is available you may be required to take a lower dose or different type (e.g. tablets instead of capsules) for the duration of the shortage.

Where your prescribed medication or a suitable alternative cannot be sourced, a break in treatment may need to be considered as an option. This will be undertaken in agreement with your healthcare professional representatives and would be for the duration of the medicine supply issues only.

Is it safe to stop taking ADHD medicines suddenly?

Treatment guidelines for ADHD recommend, under medical guidance, having regular treatment breaks from ADHD medicines. This means stopping your medicine to see if you still need to take it. This does not mean that you cannot restart it in the future, when supplies are available.

Stopping stimulant medicines (methylphenidate and lisdexamfetamine)

You should not experience any harm from stopping these medicines suddenly. Stimulant medicines can be stopped at weekends or during school holidays to preserve supplies where an alternative cannot be sourced.

Stopping non-stimulant medicines (guanfacine)

Non-stimulant medicines have to be taken every day for them to work. These should not be stopped without guidance from your healthcare professional.

Guanfacine should be stopped slowly as it can cause your blood pressure to increase if stopped suddenly. Speak to your healthcare professional as soon as possible if you cannot get your prescription from a pharmacy.

When can I re-start my medication?

If your medication has been stopped due to supply issues, your GP practice will liaise with your specialist provider to ensure your medicine is re-started appropriately and that any necessary monitoring is also undertaken.

Your medicine will not be re-started until stocks of medicines are fully stabilised, this is to ensure there is no further disruption to your medication regimen.

Non-medicine strategies for managing ADHD symptoms

Below are some recommended strategies that may help reduce the impact of ADHD on your day-to-day life. These strategies should be used every day, as well as taking your ADHD medicine. However, they may be especially helpful to think about if your ADHD medicine is unavailable. These include:

- Changing lighting and noise
- Reducing distractions
- Making changes to education or work to have shorter times of focus and having movement breaks
- Using notes, checklists and diaries/ planners
- Increasing exercise, especially outside in nature

Details of UK/ local support groups and charities

- <https://www.ukaan.org/support-groups>
- <https://www.scottishadhdcoalition.org/local-groups-in-scotland/>
- <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>