Managing ADHD medication

(ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

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This information is for people taking medication for ADHD, their carers, families, schools and workplaces. It has been produced to help you understand the supply issues, how it may affect you or your loved one and what you can do.

Supplies of some ADHD medicines and certain brands continue to be intermittent (with stock available at some times but not at others). Please bear with your pharmacy and GP surgery as they have no control on when supplies will and won't be available. We also know that the supply issues are global.

We know that sometimes there can be limited supplies of certain medications, and that this is very frustrating and there is little you can do about it.

These things may help:

- Tell your family, friends, school, or workplace about the shortage of medication. This can help them understand so they can be more supportive and make adjustments for you.
- Check how much medication you have on a regular basis, so you can manage your supply as well as you can, and so that you don't run out. It's a good idea to try to order around 10-14 days before your medication supply runs out, which gives you time to try elsewhere if your usual pharmacy is out of stock.
- Try different pharmacies if you cannot get your prescription from your usual pharmacy.
- Reduce your dose safely or use it differently if you are unable to get your usual medicines.
- Some coping strategies may help such as increased physical activity, organised approach to daily living, good sleep, eating a balanced diet, and talking therapies. However, we know that this might be not possible for everyone.
- Medication helps people with ADHD pay attention during tough tasks like exams, driving, or at work. If you are a parent with a child with ADHD, think about ways you can support your child with exams or study or give extra time.
- It may lead to impulsive behaviours such as being indulgent, underestimating tasks, or acting without thinking.

We know these things are not as simple as they sound for people with ADHD. At the bottom of this leaflet are some useful links to support and information that may help you manage.

What medicines continue to be affected by the shortage?

Methylphenidate (Equasym brand)
Liquid Atomoxetine

There are other ADHD medicines available - see ‘are there alternative meds’ below.

How long will the shortage last?

We do not know. There is no definite date for when new supplies will become available so it may be longer. We will continue to monitor the situation carefully and provide updates.

Who can I ask for advice about my medicines?

Your pharmacy, GP practice, private provider and NHS ADHD services know how important your medicine is to you. They are working hard to try to minimise the impact on people affected by these shortages.

If you cannot get your medicine, it is unlikely that your pharmacy, GP practice, private provider and/or ADHD services will be able to help you find any, but they may be able to help you or provide advice to manage the impact the medicines shortage is having.

If you use a private provider to get your prescriptions, there may be additional costs for getting support or alternative medicines prescribed.

We know that you need your medicine to help manage your ADHD symptoms. We understand how frustrating supply issues are for everyone affected.

What if I’m unable to get my usual medication?

Running out of ADHD medication can be worrying and distressing.

Without your ADHD medication the ADHD symptoms they managed will return. ADHD symptoms may reappear or get worse. Hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattention may become problems again within a day or so of stopping medication. ADHD affects everyone differently and your symptoms are specific to you. Please

ask for support from your GP if you are struggling with your mental health, they may be able to help you find other ways to manage this.

It's a good idea to try to order around 10-14 days before your medication supply runs out, especially if there's a bank holiday coming up, which gives you time to try elsewhere if your usual pharmacy is out of stock.

If you have a prescription, contact your pharmacy to see if they have supplies. Do try different pharmacies if you can't get your prescription from your usual pharmacy.

The NHS website can help you find you local pharmacy: Find a pharmacy - NHS Some pharmacies also offer online stock checkers, for example: Boots pharmacy | Online Prescription stock checker.

If you are unable to get your usual medication, you can contact your GP, NHS ADHD service or private provider to discuss whether to switch medications to a different type or brand.

What can I do to manage my ADHD if I can't get my usual medication??

You can share a copy of this information to help others understand or direct them to the Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) conditions page on the NHS website, or schools to Clinical Partners advice for schools to help children and young people with ADHD.

If you are taking methylphenidate, you could make your supply of medicine last longer by not taking it every day. Think about if there are days you could manage without your ADHD medication, for some people this could be when they are not at work or school. It is medically safe to take breaks with this medication.

Medicines have a generic name which refers to the active ingredient of the medicine and then a brand name from the manufacturer used for marketing purposes. So, for example, there is generic ibuprofen which has a brand name called Nurofen. This is the same for ADHD medications (for example, generic methylphenidate has several brands including one called Equasym).

Not all ADHD medications are available in the generic form, but methylphenidate is. Your prescription can be changed from the branded version (if you are on methylphenidate tablets, not capsules), this needs to be done by your prescriber, the pharmacy cannot do this for you. This change is safe and will not affect your treatment.

Are there alternative medications available?

Your prescriber may be able to prescribe another ADHD medication to reduce your symptoms, like moving you from branded methylphenidate to the generic, or prescribing a different medication. This might not be suitable for everyone, and these medicines could also be affected by the shortages. There may be times when you have no medication.

What about Right to Choose?

If you are eligible for an Autism or ADHD assessment you have the legal right to choose an assessment service.

The service you choose will be able to prescribe you medication if it is suitable, as this requires a specialist to start and monitor you until the medication and dose is correct for you.

Find out more about Right to Choose (you may also hear this called Shared Care or Patient Choice):

- Your choices in the NHS - NHS
- Right to Choose - Public information :: West Yorkshire Health & Care Partnership

If you choose a private provider they are responsible for your assessment and the titration of medication – which means getting you on to a stable dose. At that point, they may make arrangements to hand back to your GP for ongoing prescriptions.

What if I move to another area?

It is a good idea to have early conversations with your current provider of ADHD medication before you move to another area as it is likely you will need to be referred to the ADHD service in the new area for monitoring and there may be a waiting list.

What about transitioning from children's to adult's ADHD services?

There should be a joint transition appointment with the Bradford and Airedale Neurodevelopmental Service (BANDS) adult service when transferring a young person over when they reach 18 years of age. It is a good idea to have early conversations with your child's service about what the process looks like and any impacts on medication if you have to wait to be seen by adult services.

How to take ADHD medication and their side effects

The most commonly prescribed ADHD medications are:

- Methylphenidate
- Lisdexamphetamine
- Guanfacine
- Atomoxetine

Easier to read patient information leaflets, which include side effects for suggested medication, should be provided by your GP or private provider.

You should also read the leaflet that is included in your medication box.

You can also find information about different medications, how to take them and their side effects online: Medicines A to Z - NHS

Is it safe to stop taking guanfacine if I run out?

No, Guanfacine must always be stopped slowly by gradually decreasing the dose over a period of time. If you stop taking this medication suddenly it can cause your blood pressure to increase.

GP practices and ADHD services have contacted patients who take Guanfacine to discuss how to adapt treatment safely.

Is it safe to stop taking Atomoxetine if I run out?

Yes, it is safe. Atomoxetine is not known to have withdrawal side effects or symptoms, which means there are no side-effects if you stop taking it. However, if

you stop taking this medicine it can cause changes in your ADHD symptoms. Stopping your ADHD medicine means your ADHD symptoms will return.

Is it safe to stop taking methylphenidate if I run out?

Yes, it is safe. This medication can safely be stopped for a few days, for example over weekends, and taking breaks from medication on days when you feel you don't need it can help your supply last longer. There are no known side effects from stopping this medication.

Is this shortage affecting all pharmacies?

This is a national shortage affecting all pharmacies – including hospital and community pharmacies. Pharmacies may use different suppliers for medicines so availability can vary. This is why some pharmacies have supplies while others may not. Availability can change quickly, so do check regularly.

Why is there a continuing shortage of ADHD medication?

Medicine supply issues happen and can be caused by lots of things. It could be manufacturing problems, or delivery problems. Problems can develop quickly and can be national or more local supply issues.

The shortage of ADHD medicines is caused by a combination of manufacturing issues and an increased global demand as more people are diagnosed as there is greater awareness of ADHD.

Your community pharmacy team is working hard to try to get your medicines. Please be patient with the staff.

Community Pharmacy England have produced a general patient factsheet about medicines supply issues.

What do I do when my regular medication is back in stock?

As shortages resolve, your regular medication may be coming back into stock. Most people can restart the medication they were on previously without any problems. However, if you have taken a longer break from your medicine when you start again you may notice more side effects and it might take a while for medication to work again. If you need further help and advice discuss with your ADHD service about restarting.

Please also be aware that as medicines come back into stock, you may have to try different pharmacies to obtain your prescription. It can take time for supplies to reach pharmacies despite manufacturers saying they are available. It is possible with many people waiting for supplies that when stock returns it may not be available straightaway for everybody.

Please remember…
Our doctors, nurses and pharmacists are doing everything they can to help people through a difficult situation. We know that this is a very difficult time for you, but please be patient and remember that this is a worldwide manufacturing problem and healthcare staff are doing their very best to help.

Additional Information for Parents with Children at Special Educational Needs (SEN) Schools

If your child is having medication administered at school by staff, it is important to let the SEN team know about the shortages in ADHD medication.

Schools need to keep a box labelled for the individual child at school. Due to the current shortages, it may not be possible to provide a separate supply for home and school. The advice would be to share the medication between home and school and agree with the school who the medication should be handed to at the start of the school day and who will hand it back to the parent at the end of the school day. Have a conversation with your community pharmacist who may be able to provide appropriately labelled supplies.

In cases, where the ADHD medication is needing to be shared between home and school, please request the next prescription when you have 14 days of medication left. This should allow enough time for the prescription to come from the GP/ADHD team or private provider and for the pharmacy to source the medication.

It might be helpful to agree a plan with the school SEN team and class teacher to help support your child whilst they are at school in the event your child attends school and has not taken their ADHD medication. If you or the SEN team would like advice and support, please contact your child's CAMHS team.

If you are working with social care - please let your social worker/ family support worker know of the shortages.

Useful links

These websites have information that might be useful in helping you manage your condition and symptoms because of medication shortages.

NHS advice on living with -Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Adults
Healthy Minds neurodiversity support page (Bradford).

ADHDadultUK

Advice for parents and children
Mind Mate neurodiversity information hub (Leeds).

Young Minds

Young Minds – a guide for parents and carers. Supporting your child with ADHD.

Healthy Minds neurodiversity support page (Bradford).

Advice for Schools
Clinical Partners advice for schools to help children and young people with ADHD.