

FAQs – ADHD Medication Shortages

Date: 14 November 2023

Which medications are affected by this shortage?

The shortage is affecting most preparations of Methylphenidate, Lisdexamfetamine, Atomoxetine and Guanfacine. Some ADHD medications remain available but are in limited supply and therefore cannot meet increases in demand.

We understand that ADHD can be a difficult and impairing condition and that ADHD medication can often form a vital lifeline for patients and their families. We appreciate that this is a trying and a stressful time with medications intermittently coming in and out of stock. Staff in CFT, GPs, pharmacies and wider NHS services do not have any control over this but we will do our very best to provide adult clients, children and their families with more specific information and advice as we hear of updates.

Why is there a shortage of these medications?

The Government have told us that there is a national shortage of medicines used to help manage ADHD symptoms. The shortage of these products is caused by a combination of manufacturing issues and an increase in global demand.

What impact is this having?

- New patients or those who have previously been treated but are not currently prescribed medication cannot be started on products affected by the shortage until supply issues have resolved.
- Unfortunately, there will be situations where patients will be without their medication until supplies are resumed. No additional prescriptions can be issued as any controlled drug prescription (methylphenidate, lisdexamfetamine and dexamfetamine) is only valid for 28 days and most of these issues will take longer than that to resolve.

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How long is the shortage expected to last?

Unfortunately, the situation continues to change, and it is currently unclear when the supply disruptions are expected to be resolved. A national patient safety alert, issued by the Department of Health and Social Care at the end of September, suggested the situation may take several months to return to usual levels of supply, which will likely be in the new year.

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

If one pharmacy is unable to obtain supplies, please try a different pharmacy.

The following link will help you find pharmacies in your local area: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>

Pharmacies may use different suppliers or wholesalers to source medicines so availability will depend on whether each pharmacy's suppliers have stock or not. Please try visiting independent pharmacies as well as the larger pharmacy chains, as their suppliers will differ.

Some larger pharmacy chains have stock checkers online you can access to determine which of their branches have the medication you have been prescribed. An example of a stock checker (other pharmacy chains may have their own versions) is included below: [Boots stock checker](#)

Where there is a known disruption to medication, supply levels can change quickly. This is why pharmacies in one area may be able to find a medicine and others may not. Alternatively, it may be best to leave the prescription (FP10) with a pharmacy that could check wholesaler stock levels daily and place an order.

What is the advice regarding taking and stopping taking medication?

In children and young people: for stimulant medications, consider only taking medication on days where the patient attends education to attempt to prolong your stock. ***Our Adult ADHD team do not recommend this for adult patients.***

- Stimulant medication (methylphenidate/dexamfetamine/lisdexamfetamine) and atomoxetine can safely be stopped abruptly.

- Guanfacine (used in under 18 years only) should not be stopped abruptly. There is a risk of rebound hypertension (high blood pressure). You cannot half or crush Guanfacine as they are prolonged release. You will be contacted to advise how to safely reduce Guanfacine.

Are there any other medications available to treat ADHD?

Currently the shortages are affecting all types of ADHD medications. It is important to receive health advice before stopping any ADHD medication, or reducing the amount that you take. In some circumstances it may be possible to offer different treatment to your usual medication, or to consider different strengths of medication, this might not be possible or appropriate for all patients. **However, it is important to note that we cannot always rely on alternative medicines. Any medicines still in stock may also run out.**

What other things can I do to help my child or myself?

Whilst there may not be an alternative medicine, there are coping strategies to help if you are without medicines. Things such as effective communication, increased physical activity, and supporting an organised approach to daily living can all help cope with ADHD. Other support measures include getting a good sleep, eating a balanced diet, exercise, and psychoeducation (learning and understanding about mental health and wellbeing). There may be other strategies that can be put in place at home, school or work. Speak to your child's teachers, health and/ or social care team if you need support with exploring these options. If you are an adult patient with ADHD talk with your employers and explain the situation and the impact that medication shortages may have on you so that they can put in extra support if needed.

Please see online resources below for more help and advice:

The ADHD Foundation is the UK's leading neurodiversity charity providing advice and resources:

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/resources

YoungMinds are a mental health charity for children, young people and their parents, making sure all young people can get the mental health support they need:

www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/adhd/

AADD-UK is a charity which aims to raise awareness of adult ADHD. There is an online community within the website, information and ADHD resources:

<https://aadduk.org/>

The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service is run by volunteers and contains ADHD information and resources. They offer support for people of all ages with ADHD and their family and friends.

You can also contact them if you have any further questions (020 8952 2800).

<https://addiss.co.uk/>

For information on non-medication strategies that can help with ADHD:

<http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx>

Get support in work if you have a disability or health condition (Access to Work):

www.gov.uk/access-to-work/how-to-claim

The ADHD Foundation has a guide for employers about reasonable adjustments for ADHD in the workplace <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/An-Employers-Guide-to-ADHD-in-the-Workplace.pdf>

Get Self-Help - provide free self-help resources and worksheets for managing ADHD symptoms:

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/adhd.htm>

How to ADHD is a YouTube channel which contains videos reviewing and practising strategies for many of the symptoms of ADHD in adulthood: <https://youtube.com/howtoadhd>