

## National Supply Shortage of Medicines for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Information for Patients over 18 and Carers

There is a national supply problem affecting some medicines used to help manage symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This is affecting all services across the country and pharmacies in both the community and in hospitals.

### 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 October 2023 and early 2024. Unfortunately, this is not guaranteed, and it remains unclear when supply across the different choices will be back to usual levels.

The medicines affected are:

- some methylphenidate prolonged-release capsules and tablets (Concerta XL, Equasym XL, Xaggitin XL and Xenidate XL)
- lisdexamfetamine (Elvanse Adult®) capsules
- guanfacine (Intuniv®) prolonged-release tablets
- there are also ongoing shortages of atomoxetine capsules and liquid

### Are there alternative medicines available?

Some other ADHD medicines are available but they may not be ok to use for everyone. They could also have supply problems if a lot of people start taking them.

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

If your usual pharmacy cannot order your medicine, please try a different pharmacy. Pharmacies may use different suppliers to order medicines so it depends on whether the pharmacy's suppliers have stock. Where there are supply problems with medicines, supply levels can change quickly. This is why pharmacies in one area may be able to supply a medicine and others may not.

Ask the pharmacy staff to check stock availability at the suppliers (including different strengths of tablets/ capsules to make up a dose). Unfortunately, these supply issues are affecting hospital pharmacies who also use the same suppliers.

Where an ADHD medicine is available, it may only be available in certain strengths. You may need to take a lower dose, tablets instead of capsules, or more than one tablet/ capsule to make up your dose.

### Is it safe to stop taking ADHD medicines suddenly?

Treatment guidelines for ADHD recommend 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.

- **Stimulant medicines (e.g. methylphenidate and lisdexamfetamine)**

Stimulant medicines can be stopped at weekends or during school holidays.

If you are running out of your medicine and cannot get any more from your pharmacy, try taking a lower dose if possible or only taking on days that you are working or studying. Do not take a higher dose than you are normally prescribed without speaking to your ADHD specialist prescriber. Do not break/ crush tablets or open capsules as this may affect how the medicine works.

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You should not experience any harm from stopping these medicines suddenly. If you have had a treatment break, it is normally ok to restart your previous dose when the medication becomes available again.

### • **Non-stimulant medicines (e.g. atomoxetine and guanfacine)**

Non-stimulant medicines have to be taken every day for them to work. They should not be stopped at weekends or during school holidays like stimulant medicines can. Do not break/crush the tablets as this will affect how the medicine works.

If you are prescribed **guanfacine**, this should ideally be stopped slowly as it can cause your blood pressure to increase if stopped suddenly. Speak to your GP practice or ADHD specialist prescriber as soon as possible if you cannot get your prescription from a pharmacy. Depending on your previous dose, if you have had to have a break from treatment when the medicine becomes available again, you may be required to take a lower dose at first. If this is the case, you should speak to your GP practice who will seek advice from your specialist ADHD prescriber about how best to do this.

If you are prescribed **atomoxetine** and cannot get any more from a pharmacy, try taking a lower dose if possible. Do not take a higher dose than you are normally prescribed without speaking to your ADHD specialist prescriber.

You should not experience any harm from stopping atomoxetine suddenly. Depending on your previous dose, if you have had to have a break from treatment when the medicine becomes available again, you may be required to take a lower dose at first. If this is the case, you should speak to your GP practice who will seek advice from your specialist ADHD prescriber about how best to do this.

### **Non-medicine strategies for managing ADHD symptoms**

There are some other 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/>

We are aware that these medicine shortages will be very worrying for some people. These shortages are out of the control of local NHS Lothian services. We are in regular communication with manufacturers, suppliers and other health boards and will provide updates as information becomes available. Your GP remains available for your wider health needs but will not be able to assist with access to alternative medication.

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