

18th January 2024

FAO: Schools, parents and carers residing in Cheshire East

RE: National supply issues affecting medicines used for the management of ADHD

In September 2023 it was announced via a [National Public Safety Alert](#) that there are national supply issues currently affecting some medications for the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The shortage of these products is caused by a combination of manufacturing issues and an increase in global demand.

The following 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ's) have been collated from advice previously shared with patients, parents, and carers by ADHD specialist teams across Cheshire.

Section 1: Medication advice during this period of national shortage

1. Which medications are affected?

- Methylphenidate (Equasym, Concerta, Xenidate, Xaggitin)
- Lisdexamfetamine (Elvanse)
- Guanfacine (Intuniv)

2. How long will the shortage last?

Unfortunately, the situation continues to change, and it is currently unclear when the supply disruptions are expected to be fully resolved. Latest information is accessible [here](#). Shortages of many products have resolved but others may extend to February/March 2024.

It is important to consult the ADHD specialist service or GP involved in you or your child's ADHD care before stopping any medication or reducing the amount that you/your child take.

During this period of national shortage, it is important **not to** stockpile medication and it would be reasonable to request the next prescription when you have **14 days** of medication left to allow you extra time to find a pharmacy who may be able to supply the medication.

3. Are there any alternative medications?

In some cases, it may be possible to offer an alternative brand of the same medication or occasionally a different treatment to the usual medication. Any

change in medication needs to be done by the ADHD specialist or GP involved in supporting you/your child's ADHD. Please contact the ADHD specialist service or GP for further advice. Do not try to substitute other medications yourself as this may be dangerous.

4. Is it worth 'ringing around' pharmacies to find medication in stock?

If you cannot get your/your child's ADHD prescription from your usual pharmacy, please try other pharmacies who may have it in stock. You can use the [find a pharmacy page on the NHS website](#).

If you are unable to get your prescription after trying different pharmacies, please contact the person who prescribed the medication for advice. This may be your/your child's ADHD specialist service or GP.

Please remember that this is national shortage so it still may not be possible to obtain a supply of your medicine. Your pharmacist, ADHD specialist service or GP is not responsible for the lack of medicines. They will be trying to do what they can to help you.

5. Can I ration and conserve my supplies?

If you do have some medication available for you or your child, please contact the service who prescribed the medication for advice on how you may be able to adjust treatment to make the medication last longer. For instance, this may include by giving medication to your child only on school days and having medication breaks over the weekend.

6. Can I take a treatment break from my medication and wait until supplies get back to normal?

It is important to receive health advice before stopping any ADHD medication or reducing the amount that you take. Please contact your/your child's ADHD service or GP for advice. This discussion should include an overview of any potential side effects from medication breaks.

National guidelines recommend having regular treatment breaks from ADHD medications, so it is not unusual to stop taking medication over the weekend or during school holidays.

7. What should I do if my child has medication at home and at school?

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

Schools generally like to keep an 'original pack' labelled for the 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/carer at the end of the school day.

In cases, where the ADHD medication is needing to be shared between home and school (as per the advice above), please request the next prescription when you have **14 days** of medication left to allow you extra time to find a pharmacy who may be able to supply the medication.

It might be helpful to agree a plan with the school SEN team and class teacher about what reasonable adjustments can be made to help support your child whilst they are at school, particularly if your child has been unable to take their ADHD medication due to the national shortages.

If you are open to Social Care, please let your social worker/family support worker know of the shortages.

8. I have run out of medication, what should I do?

Unfortunately, you may find due to the shortages you have run out of medication. If this happens, please contact you/your child's ADHD specialist team or GP for advice.

As a result of the shortages, you/your child may be forced to take a medication break and wait until supply resumes to recommence treatment, due to there being no other safe, sustainable alternative medications. During this time, you/your child may find that you begin to struggle with day-to-day tasks. Please let the appropriate people know about the current shortage of ADHD medications as they may be able to make reasonable adjustments. For example, your child's school, your employer etc.

Here is an overview of each medication:

- **Important Guanfacine** must always be stopped slowly as it can cause blood pressure to increase if stopped suddenly. You may need to use the supplies you have to do this. Consult your ADHD specialist service as soon as possible if you cannot get your prescription from the pharmacy.
- Atomoxetine does not usually cause problems if stopped suddenly, but it is always best to ask your ADHD specialist service or GP for guidance on stopping and re-starting if you think you are running out of medication.
- Methylphenidate or lisdexamfetamine: for most methylphenidate products there is an equivalent product that can be substituted. Both of these medicines can safely be stopped for a few days, for example over weekends, but it's best to consult your ADHD specialist service or GP for guidance if you think you are running out of medication.

Section 2: What other support is available, including self-care advice?

1. How else can I support myself or my child during the shortages?

Non-medical interventions are often used in combination with medication.

- [ADHD Foundation](#) - has a wide range of advice, support, tips, and literature to help effectively manage ADHD. This includes videos, podcasts, and downloads to help with concerns such as sleep support, preparing for exams, impulse control, and risk management, supporting social skills and relationships, and staying calm and positive.
- The National [Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service](#) is another useful website to access information and resources. It has a [very useful download for parents](#) who are struggling to manage their child's ADHD sleep. Sleep disturbance is an incredibly common issue in ADHD. Regular quality sleep can lead to vast improvement in the symptoms of ADHD.
- [ADHD and you](#) - has information for adults and young people with ADHD, parents, and carers of those living with ADHD and those educating children or young people with ADHD.
- There is a range of apps to help people with ADHD. Time management is a recurrent issue and there are apps that help to organise time, block distractions for a set time, track how much time is being spent on an activity and assist in managing procrastination. There is a good overview of apps from [Devon NHS Trust](#).
- Eat a Healthy Diet: While diet does not cause ADHD, it does influence mood, energy levels, and symptoms. Set regular snack and mealtimes. Add more omega-three fatty acids to your child's diet and make sure your child's getting enough zinc, iron, and magnesium. For further help visit; <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>
- Mindfulness and/or Meditation: The benefits of mindfulness and meditation include enhanced attention control, memory, emotional regulation, coping with stress, and relationships with others; all of which can be areas of challenge for young people living with ADHD. Your child may find it helpful to practice mindfulness/meditation online (i.e., <http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>) or through apps such as i.e., Headspace, Insight Timer, Calm).

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- **Exercise Regularly:** Exercising is one of the most effective ways to reduce the symptoms of ADHD. Physical activity boosts the brain's dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin levels; all of which affect focus and attention.

2. I need urgent support with my or my child's mental health.

If there are any concerns regarding you or your child's mental health and wellbeing, the Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, 24/7 All Age Urgent Mental Health Helpline Freephone 0800 145 6485 can be contacted for advice.