

Stock shortages of medicines – advice on prescribing responsibly in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic

NHS London Procurement Partnership are appealing to all health care professionals involved in the prescribing of medications and other products on prescription to **help maintain a stable supply chain by not writing multiple prescriptions** for the same products until the acute pressures on the health service begin to ease.

The prescribing and dispensing of larger than usual quantities of medicines can - and will - lead to shortages. During these unprecedented times, it is really important that we do not overprescribe items, as this may mean that some patients will not be able to get their routine medications or acute items when they need them. During the COVID-19 emergency period, it is even more important that we do not waste essential medicines. We must all work together to try to maintain a stable and sufficient supply chain so that all patients can receive the medicines that they really need. **PLEASE THEREFORE DO NOT OVERPRESCRIBE.**

Advice for prescribers

General practices have already been advised to transfer suitable patients to electronic repeat dispensing (eRD) and the prescribing of longer durations has been strongly discouraged, as highlighted in letters to general practice from Dr Nikita Kanani and Ed Waller:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/preparedness-letters-for-general-practice/>

Advice to pharmacies

LPCs and contractors have reported several instances of prescribers extending prescription durations. Following discussions with PSNC regarding this, NHSE&I and DHSC have issued strong guidance discouraging such changes to prescribing duration as this has a negative impact on the supply chain.

Updates on the monitoring of the supply chain and methods put in place to help control this, such as eRD (which also supports reducing workload to GP practices and footfall in community pharmacies) are featured in letters from Dr Keith Ridge and Ed Waller to community pharmacies that are available here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/preparedness-letters-for-community-pharmacy/>

Advice to manufacturers and wholesalers

Please keep medicines optimisation and pharmacy teams up to date with stock issues and advise wholesalers to monitor orders from community pharmacies so there is enough to go around the country and help limit stockpiling.

