

Dear Colleague

EXTENSION TO SERIOUS SHORTAGE PROTOCOL (SSP) FOR CLARITHROMYCIN 125MG/5ML ORAL SUSPENSION

Purpose

1. This Circular advises NHS Boards and community pharmacy contractors that the UK-wide Serious Shortage Protocol (SSP) for Clarithromycin 125mg/5ml oral suspension, an antibiotic product, due to expire on 17 November 2023 has now been extended until Friday 8 December 2023.
2. The extension is applicable to [SSP053](#) which allows community pharmacists to substitute this product with Clarithromycin 250mg/5ml oral suspension. Please note that the SSP for Clarithromycin 250mg/5ml oral suspension ([SSP054](#)) allowing pharmacists to substitute this item with Clarithromycin 250mg tablets is not being extended and expires on Friday 17 November 2023.
3. Community Pharmacists are advised to review and familiarise themselves with the end dates for these two SSPs.

Background

4. To assist in alleviating current supply issues with medicines availability, various UK-wide SSPs have been issued by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), in consultation with the Scottish Government. An SSP is an additional tool to manage and mitigate medication shortages for prescribing clinicians, community pharmacies and importantly patients.
5. Each SSP is individually developed and authorised clinically, to enable community pharmacists and dispensing doctors to dispense a different strength or formulation or alternative medicine or appliances in accordance with the protocol, rather than having to refer prescribing decisions back to the original prescriber. These protocols are time limited.

17 November 2023

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
Director Practitioner Services,
NHS NSS

For information

Directors of Pharmacy
NHS Medical Directors

Enquiries to:

Pharmacy Team
1st Floor East Rear
St Andrew's House
EDINBURGH
EH1 3DG

Email:

PharmacyTeam@gov.scot

www.gov.scot

6. Community pharmacists are expected to use their professional skill and judgement to decide whether it is reasonable and appropriate to substitute a person's prescribed medicine using the SSP. The person will also have to agree to the alternative supply.
7. The DHSC frequently reviews which medicines should be under an SSP and for how long they need to be in place.
8. Any amendments or extensions to existing SSPs are documented on the NHS Business Services Authority website using the following link: [Serious shortage protocols \(SSPs\) | NHSBSA](#).

Enquiries

9. For any queries on the details of this circular, please contact the Scottish Government Pharmacy Team at PharmacyTeam@gov.scot.

Action

10. **Health Boards are asked to note the contents of this Circular and to bring it to the attention of community pharmacy contractors on their Pharmaceutical Lists and Area Pharmaceutical Committees. This Circular should also be brought to the attention of General Practices.**

Yours sincerely



Alison Strath
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer