



9 May 2024

Medicine Supply Alert Notice

Cefalexin 125mg/5ml and 250mg/5ml oral suspension

Priority: Level 2*

Valid until: early July 2024

Issue

1. Cefalexin 125mg/5ml oral suspension is out of stock from mid-April until early July 2024.
2. Cefalexin 250mg/5ml oral suspension is out of stock from late-April until early July 2024.
3. Cefalexin 250mg tablets are out of stock until early May 2024.
4. Cefalexin 250mg and 500mg capsules remain available and can support an increase in demand.
5. Cefalexin 500mg tablets remain available and can support an increase in demand.
6. Cefaclor (Distaclor®) 125mg/5ml and 250mg/5ml oral suspensions remain available but can only support a partial uplift in demand.
7. Cefuroxime (Zinnat®) 125mg/5ml oral suspension remains available and can support an increase in demand.
8. Alternative liquid formulations of antibiotics remain available.

Advice and Actions

Prescribers should:

- review patients to determine if cefalexin oral suspension is the most suitable antibiotic for the infection being treated;
- confirm whether the patient can take solid oral dosage forms and consider prescribing cefalexin capsules or tablets where required, if they can deliver the dose prescribed; and
- if the above option is not suitable consider prescribing a liquid formulation of an alternative antibiotic in line with local treatment guidelines or individual microbiology results or an alternative cephalosporin oral suspension (e.g. cefaclor or cefuroxime, if appropriate) and seek specialist microbiology advice where needed.

Additional Information

Clinical Information

Licensed indication

9. Cefalexin is a 'first generation' cephalosporin licensed for the treatment of the following infections due to susceptible micro-organisms: respiratory tract infections, otitis media, skin and soft tissue infections, bone and joint infections, genito-urinary infections, including acute prostatitis and dental infections.

Urinary tract infections

10. Children aged 3 months or older may be prescribed cefalexin oral suspension as a second line treatment of acute lower urinary tract infections, as per [NICE guidance NG 109](#).
11. A dose of 125mg of cefalexin is an off-label regimen for UTI prophylaxis. [NICE guidance NG112](#) lists cefalexin as a second-choice oral antibiotic for prophylaxis of recurrent UTI in both people aged 16 years and over (125 mg at night) and children aged 3 months to 15 years (12.5 mg/kg at night, maximum 125 mg per dose).
12. [NICE guidance NG 109](#) and [NICE guidance NG112](#) on antimicrobial prescribing for lower urinary tract infection and recurrent urinary tract infection, respectively, list alternative antibiotics that can be considered in these settings.

Off label manipulation of cefalexin solid dosage forms

13. The Handbook of Drug Administration via Enteral Tubes points out that crushing cefalexin tablets or opening cefalexin capsules should be avoided due to risk of sensitisation to cephalosporins.

Advice on managing the supply of antibiotics in the event of a shortage

Reserve supplies of liquid antibiotics for patients where doses cannot be measured using a whole tablet or capsule. Where tablets or capsules can be used, then they should be considered the first line option.

Refer to **Specialist Pharmacy Service** resource for guidance on using solid oral dosage forms in children – advice can be found [here](#).

Assess all patients aged 5 years and over for ability to swallow solid oral dosage forms before opening, crushing or dispersing tablets or capsules.

Further advice on swallowing pills along with practical information for parents and carers can be found [here](#).

Links to further information

- [SmPC: Cefalexin](#)
- [BNF: Cefalexin](#)
- [BNF: Cephalosporins](#)
- [SmPC: Cefaclor \(Distaclor®\) oral suspension](#)
- [SmPC: Cefuroxime \(Zinnat®\) oral suspension](#)
- [NICE guidance \(NG112\): Urinary tract infection \(recurrent\) - antimicrobial prescribing](#) [NICE guidance \(NG109\): Urinary tract infection \(lower\) - antimicrobial prescribing](#)

Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) website

14. The UK Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in conjunction with SPS have launched an online Medicines Supply Tool, which provides up to date information about medicine supply issues. To access the online Medicines Supply Tool you need to register with the [SPS website](#). Registration for access to the website is available to UK healthcare professionals and organisations providing NHS healthcare. The tool is located under the Tools tab and then click on the Medicines Supply option.
15. We encourage prescribers, pharmacy professionals, and pharmacy procurement leads in Scotland to register with the SPS website and use its Medicine Supply Tool to stay up to date concerning medicines supply disruptions. Please be aware that while medicines supply issues will appear on the SPS website, some of the recommended actions may not always be appropriate / relevant within the Scottish context.

Enquiries

16. Enquiries from Health Boards or healthcare professionals should be directed in the first instance to PharmacyTeam@gov.scot (primary care) or NSS.NHSSMedicineShortages@nhs.scot (secondary care).