

To: – Community Pharmacists
 – Chief Hospital Pharmacists
 – Regional Chief Pharmacists

NHS England
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Dear Colleague,

Group A Streptococcus and antibiotic supply

Firstly, I want to thank you and your teams for your outstanding work as we head into winter. Your efforts throughout the year have been invaluable, and as head of profession I am extremely grateful to you all.

As you will be aware, high levels of demand are currently being observed in many NHS services due to concerns over Group A Streptococcus (GAS), although thankfully numbers of invasive GAS infections remain low. There have also been some concerns raised about the supply of antibiotics related to the GAS, so I write now to set out the current situation.

Supply of antibiotics

Local pharmacy teams may be experiencing a temporary interruption of supply of some relevant antibiotics due to increased demand. On a national level, sufficient stock exists for the NHS.

We are working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), which has overall responsibility for medicines supply and has taken actions to help ensure medicines continue to be available.

The Medicines Supply Team at DHSC has been working with manufacturers and wholesalers to assess the supply situation, which is as follows:

- Supplies of antibiotics for the treatment of Group A Strep have seen a surge in demand and may be in limited supply at certain wholesalers and pharmacies, particularly phenoxymethylpenicillin presentations.
- Supplies are readily available with manufacturers and deliveries into wholesalers and pharmacies are being expedited and are expected in the coming days.

Where antibiotic therapy is required for the treatment of suspected GAS infection, prescribers and local pharmacy teams should:

- work together to understand availability of antibiotics locally, and;
- order antibiotic stocks sensibly, in line with patient demand, ensuring that excessive quantities are not ordered and avoiding more pressure on the supply chain.

Advice for parents

I am confident that pharmacy professionals in all sectors will be capable of providing advice and reassurance to worried parents and carers, as well as patients, as they do routinely every day.

New guidance for patients and the public is also now available at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/strep-a/. Colleagues, particularly in community pharmacy, may find it helpful to display this prominently on site and online for individuals seeking advice.

Thank you again for your continued efforts to provide high quality care, advice and support to those who need it.



David Webb FRPharmS
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England