

From the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Professor Cathy Harrison



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

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FOR ACTION

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Dear Colleagues,

SERIOUS SHORTAGE PROTOCOL– CEFALEXIN 250MG/5ML ORAL SUSPENSION SUGAR FREE

Serious shortage protocols (SSPs) under the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMRs) are an additional tool to manage and mitigate medicines shortages. An SSP enables community pharmacists to supply a specified medicine in accordance with a protocol rather than a prescription, without needing to seek authorisation from the prescriber, saving time for patients, pharmacists and prescribers. They are used in the case of a serious shortage, where a medicine would be likely to be out of stock for some time, and if, in the opinion of ministers, it would help manage the supply situation.

I am writing to inform you that in response to supply concerns across the UK regarding the availability of **cefalexin 250mg/5ml oral suspensions sugar free** the Department of Health of Social Care (DHSC) has reactivated an SSP.

SSP078 provides that for **every 5ml of cefalexin 250mg/5ml oral suspension sugar free that is originally prescribed, 5ml of cefalexin 250mg/5ml oral suspension (non sugar free) can be supplied.**

This SSP is due to expire on **Friday 8 August 2025**. Pharmacists should refer to the latest version of this SSP which is available on the Business Services Organisation (BSO) dedicated page on its website:

<https://bso.hscni.net/directorates/operations/family-practitioner-services/pharmacy/contractor-information/drug-tariff-and-related-materials/serious-shortage-protocols-ssps/>.

SSP078 authorised by the Secretary of State on behalf of the four UK nations, has been developed by clinicians and provides pharmacists with procedures to follow in providing a suitable alternative product to help reduce the number of patients having to return to their prescriber for a replacement prescription.

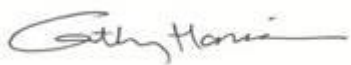
Key Points:

- This SSP does not allow for the quantity supplied to be less than the number of days prescribed on the original prescription.
- Ensure that the patient/carer is aware that the preparation of cefalexin being supplied in accordance with the SSP contains a small amount of sugar.
- For patients with diabetes, pharmacists should supply sugar free options where possible. If this is not available, patients/ carers should be informed that there is a small amount of sugar contained in the product supplied, but treatment should not be withheld. Pharmacists may wish to check the patient information leaflet or summary product characteristics if patients are concerned.
- Community pharmacists should use their professional skill and judgement to decide whether it is reasonable and appropriate to substitute the patient's prescribed order for a supply under this SSP. The patient/carer will also need to agree to supply under the SSP.
- Pharmacists do not need to routinely notify the prescriber and/or GP practice where an alternative pharmaceutical form has been supplied under an SSP. Please refer to '[Outline of Operational Guidance for Dispensers in response to issue of a Serious Shortage Protocol](#)' on the BSO website for more information.
- If a patient/carer declines to receive the medicine under this protocol, the pharmacist should use their professional judgement to determine if other courses of action are appropriate whilst taking into consideration wider supply issues. If this does not address their concerns, the patient/carer should be referred back to their prescriber for advice.

Action Required

All relevant staff should be made aware of this SSP. I would ask the SPPG to bring this information to the attention of GP Practices and Community Pharmacists directly.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer