NHS Circular:
PCA (P)(2025) 21

Chief Medical Officer Directorate
Pharmacy and Medicines Division

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Dear Colleague

EXTENSION TO SERIOUS SHORTAGE PROTOCOLS FOR CEFALEXIN ORAL SUSPENSION SUGAR FREE PRODUCTS

1 October 2025

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

Purpose

1. This Circular advises Health Boards and community pharmacy contractors that two UK-wide Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs) for cefalexin oral suspension sugar free products due to expire on 26 September 2025 have been extended until Friday 24 October 2025.

2. The extension is applicable to SSP077 (125mg/5ml strength) and SSP078 (250mg/5ml strength), which allow community pharmacists to substitute a prescription of the noted cefalexin oral suspension sugar free products with the equivalent strength and same quantity of a **non-sugar free** cefalexin oral suspension product, for eligible patients, in accordance with these SSPs.

3. Community pharmacists are advised to review and familiarise themselves with the new end date for the above noted SSPs.

Background

5. To assist in alleviating current supply issues with medicines availability, various UK-wide SSPs have been issued by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC),), in consultation with the Scottish Government.

6. An SSP is an additional tool to manage and mitigate medication shortages for prescribing clinicians, community pharmacies and importantly patients.

7. 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.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE
POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

8. 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.

9. The DHSC frequently reviews which medicines should be under an SSP and for how long they need to be in place.

10. 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

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

Action

12. **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 their local Area Pharmaceutical Committee. This Circular should also be brought to the attention of General Practices.**

Yours sincerely,



Alison Strath
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer