

Dear Colleague

EXTENSION TO SERIOUS SHORTAGE PROTOCOLS FOR ESTRADOT® PATCHES AND CREON® GASTRO- RESISTANT CAPSULES

Purpose

1. This Circular informs Health Boards and community pharmacy contractors that the four UK-wide Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs) for Estradot® (estradiol) transdermal patches, a hormone replacement therapy (HRT) product, which were due to expire on 2 October 2026, have been extended until **Friday 8 January 2027**.
2. The extension for Estradot® transdermal patches applies to [SSP079](#) (Estradot® 50 mcg), [SSP080](#) (Estradot® 75 mcg), [SSP081](#) (Estradot® 100 mcg), and [SSP082](#) (Estradot® 25mcg). These protocols allow community pharmacists to substitute prescriptions for the specified Estradot® (estradiol) transdermal patches with the equivalent strength and the same quantity of Evorel® (estradiol) or Estraderm MX® (estradiol) transdermal patches, for eligible patients, in accordance with the requirements of each SSP.
3. In addition, the two UK-wide Serious Shortage Protocols (SSP) for Creon® gastro-resistant capsules, also due to expire on 2 October 2026, have been extended until **Friday 8 January 2027**.
4. The extension for Creon® gastro-resistant capsules applies to [SSP060](#) (Creon® 10000), and [SSP061](#) (Creon® 25000), which allow community pharmacists to restrict the total quantity supplied under the noted SSP to one months' supply of the prescribed medicine.
5. All other terms of these six SSPs remain unchanged. Community pharmacists are advised to review and familiarise themselves with the new end date for the SSPs noted above.

5 October 2026

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

Background

6. 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. 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.
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