

ADHD MEDICATION · 4.13

The UK Stimulant Shortage Explained: What It Was, What to Do

The 2023 to 2024 UK ADHD stimulant shortage has largely resolved, but pockets of intermittent supply issues continue. Here is what happened and what to do if your prescription is delayed.

FOR

Adults and parents managing ADHD prescriptions

AUDIENCE AGE

All ages

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

The UK Stimulant Shortage Explained: What It Was, What to Do

What the shortage was

- **A significant supply disruption across 2023 and into 2024.** Modified-release methylphenidate brands (Concerta XL, Equasym XL, Medikinet XL), lisdexamfetamine (Elvanse and Elvanse Adult), and some immediate-release methylphenidate preparations were affected to varying degrees.
- **Caused by several factors.** A rapid rise in UK ADHD prescribing outpaced manufacturer forecasting. Manufacturing capacity was constrained internationally. Specific brands had their own supply chain issues. The controlled-drug supply chain has tighter regulatory requirements than non-controlled drugs.
- **Largely resolved as of mid-2026.** Most patients are now receiving their usual brand and formulation through their usual pharmacy. Pockets of intermittent supply issues continue for specific brands. The picture changes month to month.

What to do if your prescription is delayed

- **Speak to the pharmacy first.** They can usually tell you whether the issue is local or wider, when supply is expected to recover, and whether another nearby pharmacy currently has stock.
- **Contact your prescriber if disruption is sustained.** Options include a switch to an equivalent brand of the same medication, a switch to a different medication, or a temporary change in formulation. None of these are self-managed decisions.
- **Do not split or stretch existing supply.** Halving doses to make supply last longer is a prescriber decision rather than a patient one. Schedule 2 controlled drug rules also limit safe and legal supply adjustments.
- **Plan repeat prescriptions a week before running out.** The 28-day quantity limit on controlled drugs means there is less slack in the supply chain. Ordering a week earlier than the day you run out builds in time to absorb a pharmacy-level disruption.
- **Check the current DHSC bulletins.** The Department of Health and Social Care publishes Medicine Supply Notifications. These are the authoritative live source on the supply picture, more current than any article can be.

How we support you through supply changes

- **Structured review where supply forces a change.** If a formulation or medication switch is needed because of supply disruption, NeuroFX provides specialist review of the change, not just a pen-stroke substitution.
- **Knowing your alternatives helps.** Patients who have previously tried both stimulant families have more flexibility during a brand-specific disruption. Patients on a single family carry more risk if that family is affected.
- **Continued private prescribing remains available.** Supply disruption affects NHS and private prescriptions similarly because the supply chain is shared. Our role is to manage the prescribing decisions, not the underlying supply chain, and we work with whatever the current picture is.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your pharmacy first about any immediate supply question. Speak to your GP, your prescriber or NHS 111 if disruption is sustained, if you are running out, or if you are noticing significant return of ADHD symptoms because of a forced gap. Seek urgent help via 999 or A&E for any acute mental health crisis associated with sudden medication loss.

SOURCES

DHSC Medicine Supply Notifications; BNF; NICE NG87

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

neurofx.co.uk · info@neurofx.co.uk · 0333 533 3303