

Where can I get an emergency supply of medicine?

If you urgently need medication, contact your prescriber immediately to arrange for a prescription. If this isn't possible, you may be able to get medicine from a pharmacist (chemist) in an emergency, subject to certain conditions.

You must have been prescribed the medicine before by a doctor, dentist or other healthcare professional who is registered in the UK. Also, the pharmacist:

- will usually need to see you face-to-face
- must agree that you need the medicine immediately
- must be satisfied with the dose you have been prescribed before

The pharmacist may provide an emergency supply of up to 30 days' treatment for most prescription medicines, with these exceptions:

- permitted controlled medicines (controlled drugs): up to five days' treatment
- insulin, an ointment or cream or an asthma inhaler: the smallest pack size
- the contraceptive pill: a full treatment cycle
- liquid oral antibiotics: the smallest quantity to provide a full course of treatment

The pharmacist will then make a note in their prescription book of:

- your name and address
- the nature of the emergency
- the date of the emergency supply
- the name, quantity and strength of the medicine

Even if the pharmacist is unable to give you an emergency supply of a medicine, they can advise you on how to obtain any essential medical care you may need.

Is it an NHS service?

No. Supplying medicine in an emergency is a private service not funded by the NHS, so pharmacists can charge for it. The charge will vary, depending on the medicine and the pharmacist's policy.

Getting your medicine or a prescription

You may be able to get your medicine or a prescription in one of the ways below:

- Ask a local pharmacist if they can provide an emergency supply of your medicine.
- See a local GP and ask for a prescription. Staff at an NHS walk-in centre may be able to arrange for you to see a GP.
- In some cases, a nurse at an NHS walk-in centre may be able to supply your medicine or a prescription.
- Outside normal GP hours, you may be able to get a prescription from an out-of-hours service.

Visitors to the UK

If you are a visitor to the UK, you could get an emergency supply of medicine from a pharmacist:

- at your request, if a doctor or dentist registered in a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland has prescribed the medicine for you before
- at the request of a doctor or dentist registered in the EEA or Switzerland
- if you have a prescription from a doctor or dentist registered in the EEA or Switzerland

However, this arrangement is not applicable to medicines prescribed by other EEA or Swiss healthcare professionals, such as nurses, and it doesn't apply to all medicines. For example, pharmacists can't provide an emergency supply of:

- controlled medicines
- medicines that don't have a UK marketing authorisation

Furthermore, the pharmacist may not be able to provide an emergency supply of medication if the prescription is written in a language they can't understand.

It is illegal for pharmacists to supply medicines based on prescriptions issued outside the UK, the EEA or Switzerland. This includes prescriptions issued by doctors in the US and Canada.

Finding a pharmacy

You can use our services directory to [find a pharmacy](#) near you.

Read the answers to more questions about [medicines](#).

Further information:

- [Who can write a prescription?](#)
- [Medicines information](#)
- [Pharmacy and medicines](#)
- [Find a pharmacy](#)
- [Find an NHS walk-in centre](#)
- [About the NHS: pharmacy services](#)
- [About the NHS: GP out-of-hours services](#)

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