

News story: Update on medicines and medical products supply as we exit the EU

Leaving the EU with a deal remains the government's top priority and would give businesses the stability and certainty to prepare for our new relationship after EU Exit. However, the government must plan for every possible outcome, including no deal.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is working closely with trade bodies, product suppliers, the health and care system in England, the devolved administrations and crown dependencies (the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey) to make detailed plans to ensure the continued supply of medical products to the UK in the event of a no-deal EU Exit.

Together with industry and the health and care system, DHSC has analysed:

- the supply chains of 12,300 medicines
- almost half a million product lines of medical devices and clinical consumables
- vaccines used in national and local programmes
- essential non-clinical goods on which the health and care system relies, such as linen, scrubs and food

Around three-quarters of the medicines and over half of the clinical consumables we use come from or via the EU. The main risk to supply is reduced traffic flow between the ports of Calais and Dover or Folkestone.

DHSC also has responsibility to ensure medicines supply on behalf of the devolved administrations and crown dependencies, and they have accepted the department's offer to manage the supply on their behalf. All supply arrangements therefore take into account the requirements for the whole of the UK. There has been excellent engagement from all parties, and preparation plans are well advanced as a result.

Following this analysis, DHSC has put in place a multi-layered approach to minimise any supply disruption, including:

- securing, via the Department for Transport, additional roll-on, roll-off freight capacity away from Dover and Folkestone for goods to continue to come into the UK from 29 March
- buffer stocks and stockpiling, where this is practical, or asking industry or NHS Supply Chain to build up buffer stocks in the UK before 29 March
- buying extra warehouse space to hold additional stock
- booking space on aeroplanes for products that require an immediate shipment due to short shelf-life or specific storage conditions
- making changes to, or clarifications of, regulatory requirements so

companies can continue to sell their products in the UK even if we have no deal

- strengthening the processes and resources used to deal with shortages in the event that they do occur despite everyone's efforts

A combination of securing freight, buffer stocks, stockpiling and warehousing, and regulatory flexibility will be required help to ensure the continuation of medical supplies.

By securing additional freight capacity to ensure a continued flow of products, stockpiling and providing warehouse storage capacity as a further contingency, and removing regulatory barriers, medicines and medical products should continue to be available for the NHS, other healthcare providers and the public in the event of a no-deal EU exit.

Local stockpiling is unnecessary and could cause shortages in other areas, which could put patient care at risk. It is important that patients order their repeat prescriptions as normal and keep taking their medicines as normal.

While we never give guarantees, we are confident that, if everyone – including suppliers, freight companies, our international partners, and the health and care system – does what they need to do, the supply of medicines and medical products should be uninterrupted in the event of exiting the EU without a deal.

More information can be found in the [written ministerial statement to the House of Commons on Monday 25 February](#).