

HRT - Why is there a shortage and which medications are affected?

Why is there a HRT shortage?

There are various reasons for this.

For some types of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) there have been manufacturing issues. There has also been a large increase in demand for HRT - as more women are realising how safe and effective HRT is at improving their symptoms and also improving their future health. Many more GPs, doctors and nurses are now prescribing HRT due to improved education and knowledge, especially since the NICE guidelines were produced in November 2015.

Which types of HRT are affected?

Some combination (estrogen and progestogen) tablets are not available due to a manufacturing problem (eg. Elleste Duet).

Combination patches (containing estrogen and a type of progestogen) are not available.

Many types of estrogen only patches are not available; some of this is due to manufacturing problems and some are due to shortages from increased demand.

Women taking estrogen as a tablet can actually use the shortage as an opportunity to review the dose and type of HRT they are taking and decide whether this needs to be changed and even improved upon. Having estrogen as a patch or gel through the skin is not associated with the slight increase of risk of blood clots in the leg or lung associated with tablets, so it is the safest way of taking estrogen. If you are having trouble sourcing HRT from your usual pharmacy, it can be worthwhile trying a different pharmacy or even an online pharmacist who may have more in stock.

Which types of HRT are available?

Estrogen as a gel is still available as are some patches and tablets. Body identical progesterone is still available - this is called Utrogestan in the UK. For many women having the estrogen and progestogen separately is advantageous as it allows for more control with the dose. Women in the UK can buy NHS pre-payment certificates for their prescriptions which will reduce the monthly cost. Having a Mirena IUS inserted in order to provide the progesterone component is also an option for some women and this can be done at the surgery if appropriate: <https://patient.info/sexual-health/long-acting-reversible-contraceptives-larc/intrauterine-system>.

If you are having trouble getting hold of your usual HRT, or wish to discuss changing to an alternative type, contact the surgery to arrange to speak to a GP or Nurse practitioner.

When will my HRT become available again?

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Commissioning Group publish updates on their website regarding availability. The latest update from December 2019 advised the following:

1. Theramex have advised that the Evorel range (Evorel/Evorel Conti/Evorel Sequi) will be back in stock during February 2020.
2. Theremex have advised that the FemSeven range (Femseven Conti/FemSeven Sequi) will be out of stock until mid-2020
3. Indivina produced by Orion should be available from January 2020
4. Mylan report that Elleste Solo & Elleste Duet will be available from mid-2020

For more information on the Menopause and HRT:

- <https://www.menopausedoctor.co.uk/menopause> (a helpful website for professionals and patients created by Dr Louise Newson)
- <https://www.womens-health-concern.org> (The patient arm of the British Menopause Society with some helpful and accessible factsheets)
- <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk> (an independent website with lots of helpful information and discussion)
- We also recommend the Menopause Haynes Manual written by Dr Louise Newson.