

## **Update from Ministry of Health and Ontario Health on Children's Cold & Flu Medications and Amoxicillin Shortage (November 22, 2022)**

### **Children's cold and flu medications**

Ontario is working with Health Canada and the other Canadian provinces and territories on mitigation strategies to address the nationwide supply issue of children's cold and flu medications. Supplies of various formats of non-prescription pediatric/infant and children's acetaminophen and ibuprofen products have been limited in retail and pharmacy locations and hospitals across Canada. Manufacturers have acknowledged that demand is currently exceeding supply and have identified several causes for the supply issue. Manufacturers have also reported that they are increasing production to meet nationwide demand.

To further increase supply, Health Canada recently approved the exceptional importation of infant and children's ibuprofen from the US and acetaminophen from Australia to supply hospitals in Canada. The importation of ibuprofen has occurred, and distribution has begun.

Health Canada announced on November 14, 2022, that it secured a foreign supply of children's acetaminophen that will be available for sale at retail locations and in community pharmacies in the coming weeks. The amount to be imported will increase supply available to consumers and will help address the immediate situation. Canadians are being advised to buy only what they need, so that other parents and caregivers can access medication to meet the needs of sick children.

Ontario continues to take action to mitigate the impact of the shortage, including:

- Releasing a public communication encouraging Ontarians to continue to practice normal buying habits in order to ensure that products are available for other children in their communities.
- Ontario Health releasing a memo to primary care providers with direction on managing through the ibuprofen/acetaminophen supply issue, including highlighting alternate options that are available from pharmacies without a prescription (i.e., compounded product, chewable tablets, suppositories).
- Launching a new [website](#) on respiratory illness that informs parents on how to manage their child's fever. Parents are asked to consult with their health care provider (HCP) before giving their child non-prescription cold medicines.

The ministry recognizes the impact of drug shortages on patients, health care professionals and the health care system. The ministry continues to work with Health Canada, vendors and clinical partners to develop and implement strategies to ensure supply returns to normal.

When there is a limited supply of a drug, pharmacists and physicians should work together to address supply issues and, when appropriate and necessary, identify alternative treatment options. You may wish to speak to a health care professional or pharmacist about your children's needs as they can help identify which products are effective and needed, as well as offer options for safe alternatives.

The ministry encourages Ontarians to continue to practice normal buying habits to ensure that products are available for other children in their communities.

## **Amoxicillin shortage**

Ontario is working with Health Canada and the other Canadian provinces and territories on mitigation strategies to address the developing issue of supply of antibiotics (particularly amoxicillin and others for children).

The Drug Shortages Canada website is currently reporting shortages for various strengths of amoxicillin produced by five manufacturers, due either to manufacturing disruption or increased demand. The estimated end dates for several products are currently showing as between December 2022 and February 2023.

Several other antibiotics may be used to treat the indications for which amoxicillin is normally used including cephalexin, cefprozil and azithromycin, which are also funded through the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Formulary. Families should speak with their child's doctor or pharmacist if they aren't able to get amoxicillin products.

The ministry recognizes the impact of drug shortages on patients, health care professionals and the health care system. The ministry continues to work with Health Canada, vendors and clinical partners to develop and implement strategies to ensure supply is normal.

When there is a limited supply of a drug, pharmacists and physicians should work together to address supply issues and, when appropriate and necessary, identify alternative treatment options.

You may wish to speak to a health care professional or pharmacist about your children's needs as they can help identify which products are effective and needed, as well as offer options for safe alternatives.