

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

## DISRUPTIONS IN DRUG SUPPLY

### A WORLDWIDE ISSUE

Drug shortages are common. They occur not only in Québec but all over the world. This is not something new, and it has been criticized forcefully by pharmacists, who are working in various ways to protect you from the consequences.

### WHAT CAN YOUR PHARMACIST DO?

To deal with this situation, your pharmacist will inform you of any disruption in supply in addition to finding a substitute medication to replace your usual treatment. This can sometimes be a complex task and may take time.

With your consent, your pharmacist will check first whether your drug is available from nearby pharmacies or from various wholesalers. If it cannot be found, your pharmacist may:

- Replace your drug with another one in the same therapeutic class;
- Have your medication prepared in another form (compounding) by a specialized pharmacy; or
- Keep the same molecule but give you another dosage, if possible.

In some cases, the pharmacist may have to contact your doctor to find the most suitable treatment for you.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**  
Health Canada  
[www.drugshortagecanada.ca](http://www.drugshortagecanada.ca)

 **AQPP**  
Association québécoise  
des pharmaciens  
propriétaires

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### THE CAUSES

In most cases, the pharmacist is not to blame. Your pharmacist has your health and well-being at heart. Their mission is to provide you with the safest and most effective treatment possible.

**Various factors may explain the unavailability of a medication from a manufacturer. Among them:**

- A decrease in the number of sites where the drug is produced;
- Difficulties in finding a raw material due to quality requirements;
- A halt to production for economic reasons;
- Production delays caused by changes in processes.

Unfortunately, the exact cause of a drug shortage is usually hard to determine, given the large number of players in the supply chain.

All drug categories may be affected by supply disruptions, and the duration of a shortage is hard to predict. For complex diseases, it is possible that no substitute exists. However, for the most common conditions, a substitute treatment can usually be found.

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