



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists

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Health Department assures the public of stable medicine supply in the public health sector

Pretoria: The Department of Health would like to assure the public and stakeholders on medicine availability and changes in appearance and packaging in the public health sector. The Department has been made aware of concerns regarding medicines that may appear to be "out of stock" at public healthcare facilities in several provinces, as well as instances where patients receive medicines that are different from those they have been issued with from health facilities.

The Department wishes to reassure the public that a change in the colour, shape, packaging or manufacturer of a medicine does not mean that the medicine itself has changed. Public healthcare facilities procure medicines only from suppliers that meet stringent regulatory and quality standards. Where more than one approved supplier provides the same medicine, patients may receive products from different manufacturers over time.

Although these medicines may look different, they contain the same active ingredients, are of the same strength/quality, and provide the same therapeutic benefits. They are approved as safe, effective and interchangeable. Healthcare professionals may therefore dispense an equivalent medicine to ensure that patients continue receiving uninterrupted treatment.

Patients who have questions or concerns about changes to the look of their medicines are encouraged to speak to their doctor, pharmacist or nurse, who can explain the reason for the change and confirm that the medicine remains appropriate for their treatment.

The Department also wishes to clarify that reports of medicine shortages do not necessarily mean that patients are unable to receive treatment. In many cases, a specific brand, pack size or supplier's product may be temporarily unavailable,

while an equivalent medicine remains available and accessible. Healthcare professionals routinely manage these situations by providing clinically appropriate alternatives to ensure continuity of care.

Like many countries, South Africa's medicine supply chain can occasionally be affected by factors beyond the control of the health system, including manufacturing disruptions, global shortages of raw materials, increased international demand, transport delays and changes between procurement contracts. Despite these challenges, the Department works continuously to minimise any impact on patients.

Medicine availability is monitored through the National Surveillance Centre and other established reporting systems including a web-based digital tool called Stock Visibility System (SVS). These systems provide early warning of potential supply challenges across levels of healthcare delivery and enable the National Department of Health to work closely with provinces, healthcare facilities, suppliers and regulatory authorities to address risks promptly and maintain access to essential medicines.

The Department remains committed to ensuring that patients continue to receive safe, effective and quality-assured medicines through the public health system.

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