



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

19 May 2023

Dear Healthcare Professional,

Re: Important medicine shortage information – Ozempic (semaglutide)

You will be aware that Novo Nordisk Limited, Ireland, has notified supply constraints for Ozempic solution for injection in pre-filled pens. The supply shortage is unrelated to a product quality defect or a safety issue.

The company has stated that this is due to increased global demand. The company anticipates that intermittent supply will continue throughout 2023. Other EU countries are experiencing similar supply constraints.

In a [communication](#) to healthcare professionals (24 March 2023), the company stated that Ozempic is only indicated for treating adults with insufficiently controlled type 2 diabetes mellitus as an adjunct to diet and exercise. Any other use, including for weight management, represents off-label use and currently places the availability of Ozempic for the indicated population at risk. Reimbursement support from the HSE is available for the licensed indication and approved dosage only.

Information for prescribers

The Medical Council of Ireland guidance, as published in its Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics (8th edition), is that medical practitioners are expected to use resources, appropriately, & responsibly.

This awareness should inform decision-making in your clinical practice.

While your primary duty is to your patient, you must consider the needs of all patients and balance these duties where resources are limited.

Where you identify a risk to patient safety arising from medicine supply issues, medical practitioners are advised to:

- Inform patients of the supply issues, the potential impact on their medical management and the importance of identifying, at the earliest opportunity, when another therapeutic approach is required
- Advise patients to keep in contact with you and their pharmacist to support continuity of care in the event of their medicine not being available
- Liaise with pharmacists, medical colleagues and your professional body regarding suitable therapeutic options should a switch in medicines be required
- Be aware that off-label prescribing in an environment of short supply poses a risk to patients for whom the medicine is indicated.

Information for pharmacists

As medicines experts, pharmacists have an important role in supporting an effective health system response to the intermittent supply issue relating to Ozempic to reduce the impact of this shortage on patients. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Professional Principles, Standards and Ethics for Pharmacists, pharmacists are expected to promote the health and wellbeing of patients, by acting as a leader in the safe and effective use of medicines and healthcare resources.

During medicine shortages, pharmacists' consultation with patients prescribed Ozempic is essential to ensure continuity of care, as is encouraging patients with any concerns about their medicine to speak with their pharmacist or prescriber.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI)- the Pharmacy Regulator advises pharmacists to:

- Consider the position indicated by the marketing authorisation holder and HSE above during their practice.
- Inform patients using Ozempic of the intermittent supply issues to help minimise disruption to their treatment and to prompt conversation with their prescriber about their ongoing treatment.
- Inform patients who present with a new prescription for Ozempic of the intermittent supply issue and the possibility of not receiving the medicine during this shortage period, and encourage the patient to speak to their prescriber for advice. Pharmacists may also need to liaise with prescribers directly.
- Not order extra quantities of Ozempic as in doing so could precipitate the shortage and affect the equitable distribution to meet the needs of patients.

Information on medicine shortages, including product-specific updates relating to Ozempic is available on the Health Products Regulatory Authority's (HPRA) [website](#). Information on shortages is dynamic and may change so it is important to keep up to date with this information.

Your attention to this message is appreciated.