

Preparing Your Dispensary for Winter 2025



Rising Winter Workload

Each winter brings familiar challenges for dispensaries, and 2025 will be no different. Winter typically brings a sharp rise in respiratory infections, flu and worsening chronic conditions for vulnerable patients, who require closer monitoring. Even with the emphasis on Pharmacy First, many patients still prefer to turn to their GP, adding further pressure to already busy dispensing teams. At the same time, dispensaries are dealing with additional strain from stock shortages and staff absences. But there is good news, with thoughtful planning, practices can stay resilient and avoid feeling overwhelmed this winter.

Preparing for Winter 2025-Stock Levels

Use early winter to assess and forecast demand for commonly prescribed medications, such as antibiotics, antivirals, respiratory treatments etc.

Proactive stock management is essential:

- Review the items you dispense more frequently
- Liaise with suppliers about expected demand
- Place advance orders where appropriate
- Stay alert to potential shortages and maintain clear communication with wholesalers

Streamline Your Workflow

Review your current workflows to identify bottlenecks and adjust procedures now, before winter activity peaks. Delegation and well-defined roles can also dramatically reduce day-to-day pressures.

Managing Patient Expectations

Winter often heightens patient expectations-many anticipate rapid appointments and next-day dispensing. Clear communication is key to preventing frustration.

Encourage patients to prepare early:

- Book Flu and COVID-19 vaccinations
- Ordering repeat prescriptions in advance
- Offering guidance on managing chronic conditions, should help to reduce emergency appointments and alleviates pressure later in the season.

Be Transparent About Wait Times

Whether delays relate to appointments, medication availability or collection times, honest communication helps patients understand the situation and reduces tension. Most are far more patient when given realistic expectations.

Keeping Patient Safety at the Heart of Winter Operations

Efficiency is important, but patient safety remains the top priority, especially during busy periods when errors are more likely.

Reinforce Double-Check Systems - Focus on:

- High-risk medication checks
- Controlled Drug management
- Regular reviews of SOPs
- Ensuring all expiry dates and prescription details are verified

Small, consistent safety practices significantly reduce risk.

Monitor Vulnerable Patients Closely

Patients with chronic illnesses or complex medication schedules may require additional oversight during winter. Simple proactive check-ins can prevent complications and reduce emergency visits.

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Supporting Yourself and Your Team

Winter challenges can take a toll on the physical and mental well-being of everyone. A supported, well-rested team maintains higher accuracy, better service and more sustainable performance throughout the season.

Prioritise Regular Breaks

Longer hours may feel necessary, but skipping breaks quickly leads to burnout. Short, structured breaks help maintain focus and resilience.

Keep Team Communication Open

A quick daily check-in allows teams to raise concerns, coordinate workload, and support one another. It fosters a positive environment where everyone feels valued and heard.

Teamwork

Winter is the time to strengthen your team's confidence and capability:

- Ensure all staff are fully trained in their core responsibilities
- Provide cross-training opportunities to improve flexibility

Winter pressures are unavoidable, but they don't have to be overwhelming. With proactive preparation, transparent communication and a strong focus on patient safety and team well-being, dispensaries can not only cope but perform at a high standard throughout the season.



AH, WE HAVE A SOP FOR THAT

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The Dispensary	The Prescription	Controlled Drugs	Quality Control	High Risk Medicines
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Create additional SOPs via Dispex AI

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DSQS & DRUM Guidance

This course offers an essential and practical overview of DSQS and DRUMs. Led by Dispex experts, it equips dispensing teams, practice managers and accountable GPs with the knowledge to meet compliance standards, maintain accurate documentation and uphold quality across dispensing operations.

Participants will learn how to manage DSQS submissions, payment claims and staff competency requirements, while ensuring best practice in record keeping, confidentiality and incident reporting. The session also covers aligning staffing hours to dispensing volumes, conducting effective DRUMs with correct SNOMED coding and patient engagement. The importance of maintaining robust SOP reviews and risk management for ongoing safety and compliance.

 **14th January**

 **1 - 2pm**

 **Members: £50**
Non-Members: £100
All plus VAT, pp



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