

Cancer medicines remain in short supply across the U.S., survey finds

More than 20% of all cancer centers report shortages of five or more different medicines

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An ongoing shortage of cancer medications continues to force leading cancer centers around the U.S. to seek work-around strategies to treat patients and a majority also report that clinical trials have been disrupted, according to a new survey.

All of the centers noted they are experiencing a shortage of at least one medicine, and more than 20% of the centers are currently reporting shortages of five or more different medications. The survey was conducted by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, a nonprofit alliance of 34 treatment centers.

Meanwhile, 61% reported they are able to treat patients despite shortages, but only by trying to avoid wasting medicines, limiting use of existing inventory and administering the minimum suggested dosing. Two-thirds of the centers also said shortages delay treatment, because they must again pursue prior authorization from insurers, the [survey](#) noted.

The reasons for shortages can vary but often reflect ongoing manufacturing issues that can take extended periods of time to resolve. Yet 96% of the centers reported that state and federal policy fixes have failed to make a dent, and so the problem has not changed since the alliance regularly began asking its members about shortages three years ago.

“It is disheartening that we remain in the same situation, including recurring or continued shortages of some drugs, despite years of raising the alarm and providing insight about this disruptive and dangerous issue for cancer care in America,” said Crystal Denlinger, who heads the NCCN, in a statement.

The findings are released amid ongoing concern over shortages, in general.

The number of active shortages were 227 in this year's second quarter, although that was lower than the all-time high of 323 in the first quarter of 2024, according to recent data from the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Only shortages for antimicrobials and central nervous system treatments outpaced those for cancer medications.

Notably, 94% of the cancer centers complained that ifosfamide, a generic chemotherapy medication that is used to treat a variety of cancers — including bladder, ovarian, testicular, uterine, soft tissue sarcoma, osteosarcoma, and several adult and pediatric leukemias and lymphomas — is in short supply.

The problem can be traced to a key supplier — Simtra BioPharma Solutions, a widely relied upon contract manufacturer of sterile injectable drugs — that was cited for numerous problems by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration during an inspection of its Halle, Germany, facility last year. The company was subsequently forced to pause production.

At the time, the FDA pointed to numerous infractions, such as dozens of batches of drugs that were made using potentially compromised equipment, as well as visible particles, including loose fibers, dislodging from covers in critical drug-filling areas, according to a warning letter the agency issued the company last March.

The problems led to what the European Medicines Agency described as a “short pause” on its website. Although manufacturing has now resumed at the facility, the shortage is expected to continue until the first quarter of 2027, when the manufacturing site is expected to return to full capacity, according to the regulator.

Meanwhile, 71% of the centers reported a shortage of carboplatin and 16% for cisplatin, both of which are key chemotherapies that constitute what the NCCN called a “backbone of regimens” to treat numerous different cancers. Shortages of both medications emerged when one of the primary manufacturers ran into serious quality control issues in 2023.

The supply problems for those two drugs “never really have recovered well from the 2023 shortages, and continue to be problematic,” explained Erin Fox, associate chief pharmacy officer at University of Utah Health, who tracks drug shortages. “These are low-cost drugs that are hard to make, and we just don’t have much resiliency.”

“At our system we keep three months on hand at all times,” she continued. “This gives us a runway when supply issues happen and has let us keep all of our curative regimens going. I know that very few other systems share that belief to keep that much on hand. We’re a large referral center, and it’s worth the space and small cost for us to do this.”

Other notable shortages have been reported recently. Last month, Sanofi acknowledged short supplies of two medicines used to treat Pompe disease, and the problem emerged shortly after the FDA warned the company over manufacturing issues at the Irish facility where the drugs are made.

A shortage of intramuscular penicillin is exacerbating efforts to combat a syphilis boom in the U.S. Demand has outstripped supply on and off, but only one factory in the U.S. produced needed prefilled syringes, and only one company was approved to sell them. A recall in 2025 worsened the problem.