

NHS urges doctors to halt some blood testing as UK is hit by vial shortage

The NHS has been forced to temporarily halt some blood testing after being hit by a shortage of vials.

Becton Dickinson (BD), which makes test tubes for the NHS, warned that serious supply chain issues across the UK was delaying the production of vials.

In a memo sent to staff, the NHS told doctors to slow down regular blood tests if it was safe to do so. NHS Wales has communicated similar advice.

The guidance states that doctors can scale back some screening for blood disorders, pre-diabetes, and allergies, in addition to deferring routine infertility testing for all patients under the age of 35.

Routine wellness screening is named as another low priority area. The guidance also advises against stockpiling tubes.

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The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically increased demand for blood tubes, according to BD, and this was exacerbated by a backlog of routine blood testing that hospitals were now trying to catch up with.

The UK's supply chains have been hit in recent weeks by a perfect storm of a huge shortfall of lorry drivers, a lack of EU workers post-Brexit, and staff being forced to isolate, disrupting the supply of dozens of items from milk, to peri-peri chicken, and now medical equipment.

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It came a day after [McDonald's pulled milkshake](#) and bottled drinks from its menu due to supply issues.