

Shortage of children's medicine amid flu season highlights U.S. drug supply problems



A sign is placed near the section for children's medicine, on December 18, 2022 at a CVS in Greenlawn, NY, US. (Photo by AP)

New York, December 22 (RHC)-- The United States is grappling with a shortage of children's pain relief medications amid a winter "triple-demic" wave of COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory illnesses, according to reports citing U.S. pharma companies.

Experts blame the shortage of drugs on the speedy start of the annual flu season in the country, in combination with the rapid spread of other respiratory illnesses, which has created a rise in demand for over-the-counter medication.

It also highlights the drug supply vulnerabilities, especially when it comes to the country's ability to supply some of the most basic healthcare products. "There are more sick kids at this time of year than we have seen in the past couple of years," Shannon Dillon, a pediatrician at Riley Children's Health in Indianapolis, was quoted as saying.

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there is also a shortage of the prescription antibiotic amoxicillin due to a surge in demand. The shortages are reportedly not widespread across the country, and vary from one community to another and even within communities.

The shortages pushed pharmacies such as CVS Health and Walgreens to limit sales. Walgreens told CNN the limits are aimed "to help support availability and avoid excess purchases" while saying they were put in place to "ensure equitable access" for all customers.

Reporting a 65 percent increase in sales of pediatric pain relievers compared to the same time last year, the Consumer Healthcare Products Association said "Supplies of these products are being replenished as quickly as possible, and there is not a widespread shortage in the US."

"However, with demand for children's pain and fever medicines reaching unprecedented levels following this early and severe flu season (along with cases of RSV and COVID), we understand why some retailers have adjusted to impose limits on purchases," the group said in a statement. According to doctors and experts, shortages are expected to persist through the winter cold and flu season.

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