



“ Which medicals are currently in shortage?  
Anything unusual that people buy besides  
masks/disinfectants? ”

“ During March, people mostly bought  
compounds to improve their immune system,  
such as Esberitox compact or Vitamin C. Both  
drugs were completely sold out. ”





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Comparison to influenza: Do people buy different medication? How much higher is the number of people coming to a pharmacy compared to the normal flu season?”

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The main difference to influenza is that people are familiar with the flu and have known the disease and its complications for a while. **This is different for COVID-19.** People are scared because of this uncertainty. During the flu season, people usually buy Ibuprofen, Paracetamol, nose sprays, and cough drops. Most people buy medication to prevent disease instead of drugs to decrease the symptoms. Especially in March, more people came to pharmacies to buy multiple packs of their usual medication (especially for controlling blood pressure). Since the beginning of April however, the number of patients in my pharmacy has drastically decreased. We had a loss of more than 50% which was hard for us to handle. Since my pharmacy is located right in the city center, next to the harbor, the central station, and a big shopping mall, I am very dependent on tourists.”





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Are there any drugs that are currently sold-out? Are there alternatives for these medications?”

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Some drugs to control blood pressure (e.g. Candesartan) can currently not be bought. As of right now, we do have enough alternatives that can be sold. Hospitals do however have big problems, especially with anesthetics, such as Propofol or Midazolam.”





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Do strategies exist in order to prevent (or at least reduce) these shortages in the future?

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One idea is to start producing drugs in Europe again which is currently being discussed. But it could take up to 5 years until the local production will start. Additionally, more discount agreements (“Rabattverträge”) will be made with the different health insurances.

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“ Is bulk buying prevented in any way? ”

“ Yes, we prevent it by only selling “normal” amounts of medication to each patient. This means, for example, that we do not sell more than 2 packs of paracetamol (each with 20 tablets) to one person. The “Bundeswehr” is allowed to confiscate any medication. Last week, the Bundeswehr has confiscated 300 FFP2 face masks from pharmacies to distribute them in hospitals. ”





“How do you protect your colleagues and yourself?”

“We have Plexiglas to protect us at the check-out counter and disinfect our hands and the surface as often as possible. If needed, we wear face masks and gloves.”





“Prospects for a vaccine or cure: Is it possible to have one in this season or would it only help to prevent outbreaks in the future?”

“This is difficult for me to answer, since I’m neither a physician nor a scientist. But I don’t think that we’ll have a vaccine before 2021. Even if we’ll happen to have one before, hospital workers, doctors, and groups of risk need to receive the vaccine first. Until then, all of us probably need to wear face masks. Maybe we’ll have a new vaccine each season, comparable to the influenza vaccine. We’ll see...”

