

Dutch dash to secure 'critical' medicines after Brexit

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The Dutch government declined to name the affected drugs, saying it could trigger hoarding

The Netherlands is scrambling to secure 50 "critical" medicines currently supplied by Britain if London leaves the European Union

without a deal next month, a minister said Wednesday.

The Dutch dash is the latest sign of increasing concern in both the EU and Britain over the chances of a so-called no-deal Brexit on March 29.

After scanning around 2,700 medicines "related to Britain", Dutch public institutes identified 50 medicines used to treat life-threatening diseases or vulnerable patients, health minister Bruno Bruins said.

The medicines also "have no or no adequate alternatives on the Dutch market," Bruins said in a letter to parliament.

Bruins declined to name the affected drugs, saying it could trigger hoarding.

"Naming the medicines could lead to stockpiling—also in other EU countries," he said. "Because this also involves medicines for which few or no alternatives exist, it could lead to speculation" in products.

Measures taken to ensure continuous supplies will include possible temporary permits exempting British supplies, as well as temporary permits to import alternative medicines from other countries.

Critical medicines mentioned on the list however "does not necessarily mean there will be a shortage," the Dutch Health Ministry pointed out in a statement.

Last week, Dutch hospitals warned that patients lives were at risk in case of a no-deal Brexit.

The Netherlands has unveiled a series of protective steps for Brexit in recent weeks, as it is one of the countries most exposed to possible customs barriers with Britain.

Europe's medicines agency (EMA), which is set to quit London after March 29 and move to Amsterdam, took charge of their temporary headquarters in the Dutch capital last month.

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