

Astrazeneca to shut down its UK plant

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Singapore: If reports are to be believed, Astrazeneca is planning to shut its center in the UK. According to the Bristol Post, the UK-based drugmaker confirmed on Wednesday that it would close the active pharmaceutical ingredients unit in Avlon by 2016 or 2017. The shut down is expected to impact 250 people currently working at the site.

The news agency reported that the plant would be shut down, once a few flagship products of the drug giant go off patent. The facility makes the API for its blockbuster high-cholesterol drug Crestor and another products.

Astrazeneca spokeswoman said, "We can confirm we plan to cease active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) manufacturing at our Avlon site by late 2016 or early 2017. This is a decision we made as part of a global operations asset strategy review and that has been communicated to staff at the site."

Crestor was one of the top 10 best-selling drugs for the company that generated revenue close to \$6 billion. It loses patent protection in the US in 2016, but its sales have already been reducing since chief competitor Lipitor went off patent in late 2011 and doctors switched patients to cheaper generics of it.

Recently Astrazeneca had also announced the closure of its US site by the end of next year costing 180 jobs. Cuts are slated to begin in March. The company said production will be handled by plants in Sweden and Australia.