

Messaging accompanying issue 22 of green/red reports

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Tips for Respiratory Tract Infections this Winter

Thank you for your continued efforts in improving the safety and appropriateness of antibiotic prescribing. Since 2019 there is a continued increase in the use of more appropriate, safer, green antibiotics from 54% to 70%.

Overall, the consumption of antibiotics remains high in Ireland compared to our European counterparts. In the community setting, patients in Ireland are prescribed over twice as many antibiotics as those in the Netherlands.

Each winter there is a peak in antibiotic prescribing driven by respiratory tract infections (RTIs). Remember:

1. Think twice before prescribing antibiotics for RTIs.

Many RTIs are viral or self-limiting, and do not require antibiotic treatment.

Most cases of otitis media, sore throat, sinusitis, and bronchitis are self-limiting and do not routinely need antibiotics.

It may be useful to share with your patients the usual duration of illness of common RTIs.

Your infection	Most are better by:
Middle-ear infection	3-7 days
Sore throat	7 days
Common cold	14 days
Sinusitis	14-21 days
Cough or bronchitis	21 days

2. You can also reduce the unnecessary consumption of antibiotics by optimising the duration of antimicrobial treatment.

- The most up to date evidence suggests that for RTIs a 5 day course is as effective as 7 days.
- HSE national antibiotic prescribing guidance now recommend a treatment duration of **5 days** for **community acquired pneumonia**.
- In addition, if antibiotics are indicated according to guidance, the treatment duration recommended for **acute sinusitis, tonsillitis/pharyngitis and infective exacerbation of COPD** is **5 days**.
- This shorter duration carries less risk of development of antimicrobial resistance, reduces the risk of side effects in your patients, and can help improve patients' compliance with their antibiotic treatment.

3. Vaccination reduces illness and antibiotic use.

Ensure all your patients are up to date with influenza vaccine, COVID-19 vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine.

As always, follow-up to ensure clinical improvement and expected resolution is important. Visit antibioticprescribing.ie > Antibiotic Prescribing – Conditions and Treatments.