

## Prescribing Tip for Information

### Antibiotic Prescribing: Shortest Effective Course Length is Recommended

NICE/PHE publish [primary care prescribing guidelines](#) for a range of common infection topics, which includes recommendations on the choice, dose, and course length of antibiotics. Prescribing longer course lengths than guideline recommendations may lead to antibiotic overuse. Aligning prescription durations to guidelines can result in substantial reductions in antibiotic use in primary care.

NICE/PHE guidelines recommend a 3 day course for:

- Uncomplicated Lower UTI in a non-pregnant female

NICE/PHE guidelines recommend 5 day courses for:

- Sinusitis
- Impetigo
- Acute exacerbation of COPD
- Community Acquired Pneumonia (longer courses may be required)
- Acute Cough associated with Acute Bronchitis -in circumstances where antibiotic is indicated

NICE/PHE guidelines recommend 5-7 day courses for:

- Acute Otitis Media
- Cellulitis and Erysipelas which is Not near the eyes/nose (longer courses may be required)

*Please see NICE/PHE guidelines for complex patients, complicated infections and for those who may require longer durations than the standard.*

A [BMJ study](#) (2019) reviewed 931,015 consultations in England resulting in an antibiotic prescription issue. Prescriptions for common infections such as acute cough, sore throat, sinusitis, cellulitis and pneumonia were reviewed and were found to regularly exceed the recommended duration as outlined in NICE guidance. Rates of treatment duration beyond guidelines were highest for respiratory tract infections and were similar among patients with and without comorbidities. On average, people were spending an extra two days on antibiotics for bronchitis and four additional days for acute cystitis when compared with the duration advised within NICE guidance. **The authors concluded that substantial reductions in antibiotic use in primary care could be achieved by closer compliance with recommended treatment durations.**

The pack size can be adjusted to ensure the quantity issued corresponds with the intended duration

Name	Amoxicillin 500mg capsules		
Dosage	One To Be Taken Three Times A Day		
Quantity	15	capsule	Duration 5 Day(s)

- The recommended course length can be found in the [NICE/PHE summary](#) of antimicrobial prescribing guidance. These primary care guidelines can also now be found on [Central Lancashire Medicines Formulary, Chapter 5: Infections](#)

To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302

If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips, please contact [Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net](mailto:Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net)