

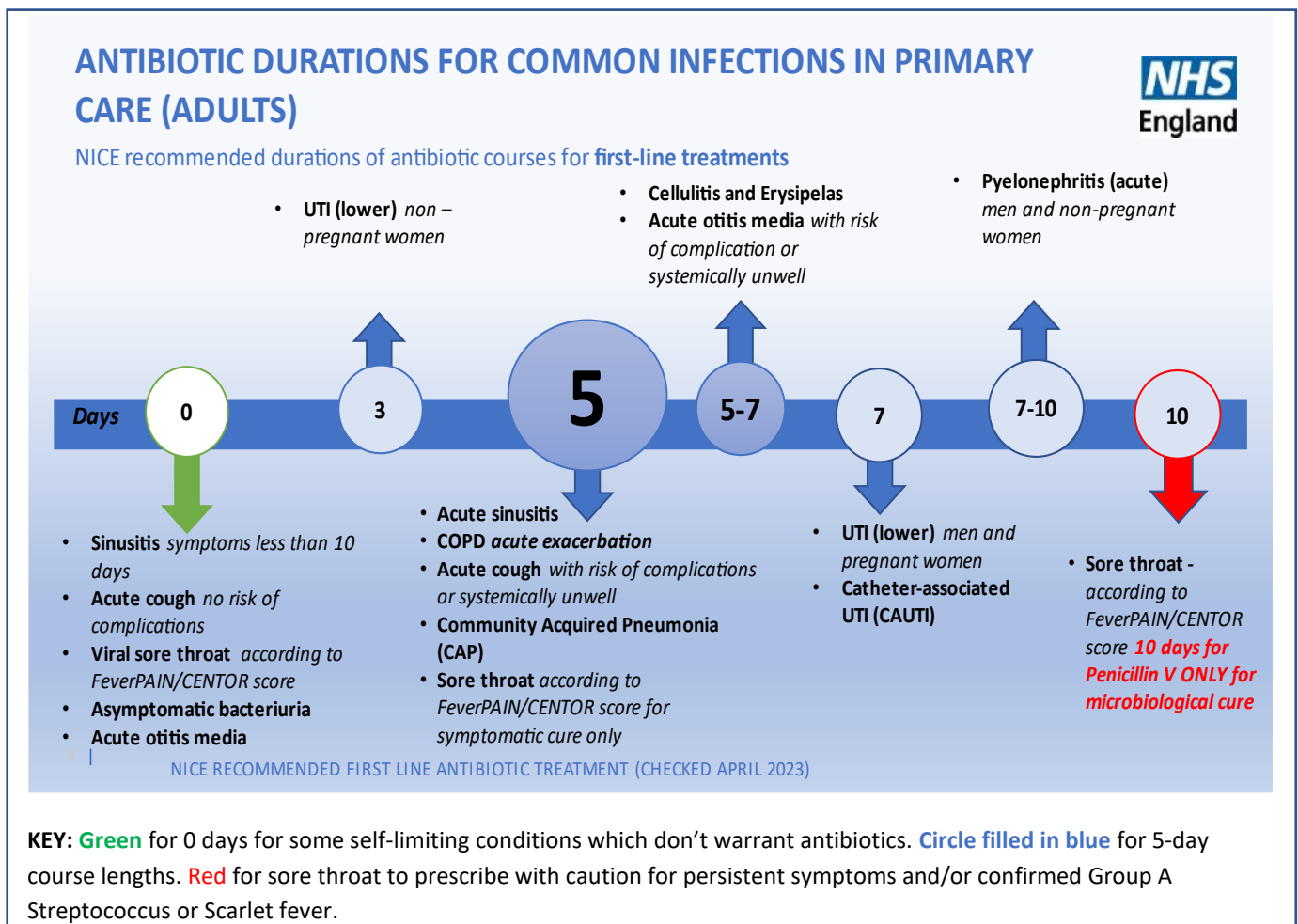
Prescribing Tip For Information

**Antibiotic durations for common infections in adults**

NICE publish primary care prescribing guidelines for a range of common infection topics, which include recommendations on the choice, dose, and course length of antibiotics. Prescribing longer course lengths than guideline recommendations may lead to antibiotic overuse, increased risk of side effects and increased risk of antibiotic resistance. (1)

A recent [meta-analysis](#) estimated that each additional day of antibiotic therapy is associated with a 4% increase in risk of side effects and a 3% increase in risk of resistance. (2) (3)

**Timeline depicting NICE recommended first line treatment course lengths for common infections.** (4)



Locally, primary care prescribing data suggests that the shortest effective courses of antibiotics are not consistently prescribed and there is considerable variation in the proportion of short and long course prescriptions. (1)

Recommended course length can be found in the NICE antimicrobial prescribing guidance for primary care [antimicrobial prescribing guidance for primary care](#)

**References:**

1. NHSE National medicines optimisation opportunities 2023/24. 31/7/2023.
2. FutureNHS. Antimicrobial resistance programme Resources from South East RMOC and APMO. Accessed 26/9/23.
3. Estimating daily antibiotic harms: an umbrella review with individual study meta-analysis. Curran J et al. Clin microbiol infect. 2022 Apr; 28(4):479-490 doi: 10.1016/j.cmi.2021.10.022.
4. Infographic produced by NHS South East regional Medicines Optimisation Committee's Antimicrobial Prescribing & Medicines Optimisation. July 2023. Shared with permission.

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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)

All content accurate and correct on the date of issue of this tip.