


Prescribing Tip For Information


### 5-day course length for common infections in adults






Research increasingly demonstrates that short courses of antibiotics are as effective as longer courses in treating patients with uncomplicated infections. Reflecting this evidence, for common infections, [NICE guidance](#) routinely recommends the shortest effective course of treatment, to reduce selection pressure for antimicrobial resistance and inadvertent patient harm from antibiotic treatment. <sup>(1)</sup>

**Five-day courses are recommended** when antibiotics are indicated for: **Sore throat, COPD (acute infective exacerbation), cough (acute), pneumonia (community-acquired) and sinusitis (acute)**. <sup>(2) (3)</sup>



## 5 DAYS FOR 5 INFECTIONS (ADULTS)



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**Sore Throat (if antibiotic indicated)** Phenoxymethylpenicillin 500mg four times a day for 5 days for symptomatic cure **OR** clarithromycin 250mg to 500mg twice a day for 5 days **OR** erythromycin 250mg to 500mg four times a day for 5 days
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**COPD (acute infective exacerbation)** Amoxicillin 500mg three times a day for 5 days **OR** doxycycline 200mg day 1 and then 100mg daily on days 2-5 **OR** clarithromycin 500mg twice a day for 5 days
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**Acute Cough (if antibiotic indicated)** Doxycycline 200mg day 1 then 100mg daily on days 2-5 **OR** amoxicillin 500mg three times a day for 5 days **OR** clarithromycin 250mg to 500mg twice a day for 5 days **OR** erythromycin 250mg to 500mg four times a day or 500mg to 1g twice a day for 5 days
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**Community Acquired Pneumonia** Amoxicillin 500mg to 1g three times a day for 5 days **OR** doxycycline 200mg on day 1, then 100mg daily on days 2-5 **OR** clarithromycin 500mg twice a day for 5 days **OR** erythromycin (in pregnancy) 500mg four times a day for 5 days
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**Acute Sinusitis (if antibiotic indicated)** Phenoxymethylpenicillin 500mg four times a day for 5 days **OR** if systemically very unwell co-amoxiclav 500/125mg 1 three times a day for 5 days **OR** for penicillin allergy doxycycline 200mg on day 1, then 100mg daily on days 2-5 **OR** clarithromycin 500mg twice a day for 5 days **OR** erythromycin (in pregnancy) 500mg four times a day for 5 days

5 | NICE RECOMMENDED FIRST LINE ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENT (CHECKED APRIL 2023)

#### Key Points:

- Antibiotics should be prescribed as recommended in [NICE primary care guidelines](#)
- Prescribing the NICE recommended dose and course length is safe and effective.
- Evidence supports 5-day course length treatment for most common infections in primary care.
- Avoiding prolonged durations of antibiotic therapy means fewer side effects and reduces the risk of antibiotic resistance.
- Acute otitis media NICE recommended course length is 5 – 7 days and suitable for 5-day course where clinically appropriate.

**NHSE aims for ≥ 75% of total amoxicillin 500 mg prescriptions as 5-day courses by March 2024** <sup>(1)</sup>

Current local position: **63% (Preston)** and **58% (Chorley & South Ribble)** of Amoxicillin 500mg capsule prescriptions are issued as 5-day courses (data: Aug 22 – Jul 23). This compares favourably to the L&SC ICB average (48%) however there is room for improvement to achieve the NHSE aim.

#### References:

1. NHS England. National medicines optimisation opportunities 2023/24. 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023
2. NICE / UKHSA: Summary of antimicrobial prescribing guidelines – managing common infections. June 2023
3. Infographic produced by NHS South East regional Medicines Optimisation Committee's Antimicrobial Prescribing & Medicines Optimisation. July 2023. Shared with permission.

**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)

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