**DID YOU KNOW?**

Most respiratory tract infections are caused by viruses so antibiotics will not work.

**ANTIBIOTICS ONLY KILL BACTERIA**

Not the viruses that cause most respiratory tract infections. Up to 8 out of 10 sore throats are caused by viruses.

**ANTIBIOTICS HAVE NO DIRECT PAIN RELIEVING ACTIVITY**

Antibiotics can cause side effects such as diarrhoea, thrush or rash.

**ANTIBIOTICS CAN CAUSE SIDE EFFECTS**

Such as diarrhea, thrush or rash.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Taking antibiotics when they aren’t needed can make bacteria resistant to the antibiotic.

**WHEN YOU TAKE ANTIBIOTICS, BACTERIA IN YOUR BODY CAN BECOME RESISTANT TO THE ANTIBIOTIC**

This could make it harder to treat them.

**THE RESISTANT BACTERIA CAN BE SPREAD TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

These antibiotic-resistant bacteria can stay in your body for up to 1 year afterwards.

**WHAT KIND OF ADVICE WOULD YOU LIKE?**

- Pain relief
- Reassurance
- Information on duration

**MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCTS ARE AVAILABLE TO RELIEVE YOUR SYMPTOMS - WHAT KIND OF PRODUCT DO YOU PREFER?**

- Solubes
- Drops
- Syrups
- Gargles
- Lozenges
- Tablets
- Sprays

“If symptoms last longer than we discussed, do not improve or you develop new symptoms, come back and see me.”
Most patients seek information on the cause, prognosis and duration of symptoms, and pain relief. 1

**MYTH**

Patients consulting for upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) always want an antibiotic. 2

**FACT**

The majority of respiratory tract infections, including sore throats, are caused by viruses. 1,4 They are usually non-serious and self-limiting 2 and resolve without antibiotics in 1–2 weeks. 1,4 However, patients at high risk of complications, presenting with red flag symptoms, or who appear very unwell, should be seen by a doctor and may require antibiotics. Symptoms that persist without improvement, or appear to be getting progressively worse may also require a doctor.

**ADDRESS PATIENT’S CONCERNS**

- Ask the patient about their main symptom(s) and what they are concerned about
- Recognise that URTIs can be worrying and uncomfortable for patients

**BE VIGILANT – ASSESS SEVERITY**

The majority of respiratory tract infections, including sore throats, are caused by viruses. 1,4 They are usually non-serious and self-limiting 2 and resolve without antibiotics in 1–2 weeks. 1,4 However, patients at high risk of complications, presenting with red flag symptoms, or who appear very unwell, should be seen by a doctor and may require antibiotics. Symptoms that persist without improvement, or appear to be getting progressively worse may also require a doctor.

**RED FLAGS?**

ANY OF THESE RED FLAG SYMPTOMS REQUIRE FURTHER INVESTIGATION:
- Coughing up blood 6
- Shortness of breath, wheezing sounds, respiratory distress 9,15
- Great difficulty swallowing, e.g. unable to swallow food 9
- Drooling or muffled voice 4
- Neck swelling 9 on one side of the neck, not related to the lymph nodes 9
- Very high temperature (>39°C) or night sweats 9

**REQUIRE FURTHER INVESTIGATION:**

- ANY OF THESE RED FLAG SYMPTOMS

**HIGH RISK?**

BE ALERT TO THOSE PATIENTS AT INCREASED RISK OF COMPLICATIONS:
- Elderly patients aged >65 years or young children <2 years or born prematurely 9,18
- Immuno-compromised patients 8
- Patients with pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, cystic fibrosis, chronic lung disease, HIV 9,18

**COUNSEL ON EFFECTIVE SELF-MANAGEMENT**

- Reassure the patient of the non-serious nature of most URTIs and the likely duration of symptoms
- Explain why antibiotics are not necessary – use the information overleaf
- Recommend symptomatic relief, allowing for personal preferences
- Advise the patient to seek further medical advice if symptoms last longer than expected, do not improve, or if they develop new symptoms

**REFERENCES**