



# Top Tips for Discussing Antibiotics

Asking specific questions and providing information will help address patient's concerns and maintain patient satisfaction if you decide not to prescribe an antibiotic.

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| <b>C</b> | Ask specifically about patient's <b>concerns</b>          | <b>'What are the things that you are most worried about?'</b>  |
| <b>H</b> | Discuss <b>history &amp; exam</b>                         | While doing an examination provide "no problem" commentary:<br><b>'Your heart rate is normal, your temperature isn't raised.'</b>  |
| <b>E</b> | Ask specifically about patient <b>expectations</b>        | <b>'How do you think I could most help you today?'</b><br><b>'How do you feel about antibiotics?'</b>  |
| <b>S</b> | Provide non-serious explanation for <b>symptoms</b>       | <i>'Your body produces phlegm as a <b>normal reaction</b> to inflammation in the airways to your lungs. The phlegm catches particles in your airways and helps keep your lungs clear.'</i>   |
| <b>T</b> | Be specific about illness <b>timeline</b> / usual course* | <b>'A typical cough can take 3-4 weeks to clear completely.'</b>   |
| <b>S</b> | Explain <b>shortcomings</b> of antibiotics                | <i>'Research shows that on average antibiotics may help reduce how long your cough lasts by <b>only 1 day in an illness lasting 3-4 weeks</b>. Antibiotics <b>don't help with pain</b> but have <b>side effects</b>, such as diarrhoea, nausea and rash, which can be <b>experienced by up to 1 in 10 people</b> taking antibiotics.'</i>  |
| <b>S</b> | Advise patients how to <b>self-care</b>                   | <b>'The immune system needs normal fluids to work properly, it is working hard to fight off the infection, so you need to <b>make sure you are drinking enough</b> – when people are unwell they often drink less without noticing.'</b><br><b>'Pain in the chest or throat is normally due to inflammation, <b>you can take paracetamol, and/or ibuprofen, which will help the pain and soothe the inflammation.</b>'</b> |
| <b>S</b> | Provide <b>safety-netting</b> advice                      | Provide patients with <b>specific information on red-flag symptoms</b> and when they should seek further help.   |

\* **Typical duration of common infections:** Sore throat: 7-8 days | Sinusitis: 14-21 days | Cough or bronchitis: 21 days | Otitis media: 8 days | Common cold: 14 days