

Summary of antimicrobial prescribing guidance – managing common infections

TARGET antibiotics

NICE Antimicrobial Prescribing & UKHSA

Interim Antimicrobial Guidance: Southwark, South East London ICB

Approved by: Primary Care Group Southwark: July 2023

Aims

- To provide a simple interim, empirical approach to the treatment of common infections in primary care using national guidance -NICE/CKS/BASHH
- To promote the safe, cost-effective and appropriate use of antimicrobials by targeting those who may benefit most.
- To minimise the emergence of antimicrobial resistance in the community.

Principles of Treatment

1. This guidance is based on the best available evidence at the time of development. Its application must be modified by professional judgement, based on knowledge about individual patient co-morbidities, potential for drug interactions and involve patients in management decisions.
2. It is important to initiate antibiotics as soon as possible in severe infection or in those immunocompromised, particularly if sepsis is suspected. Refer to the NICE guideline [\[NG51\] Sepsis: recognition, diagnosis and early management](#) for further information.
3. This guidance should not be used in isolation; it should be supported with patient information about safety netting, back-up/delayed antibiotics, self-care, infection severity and usual duration, clinical staff education, and audits. The [RCGP TARGET antibiotics toolkit](#) is available via the RCGP website.
4. The majority of this guidance provides dose and duration of treatment for ADULTS. Doses may need modification for age, weight and renal function. Refer to the [BNF for Children](#) for information on paediatric doses.
5. Refer to the BNF for further dosing and interaction information (e.g., interaction between macrolides and statins), ALWAYS check for hypersensitivity/allergy.
6. Have a lower threshold for antibiotics in immunocompromised or in those with multiple co-morbidities; send samples for culture and seek advice.
7. Prescribe an antimicrobial only when there is likely to be a clear clinical benefit, giving alternative, non-antibiotic self-care advice where appropriate.
8. Consider a no, or delayed, antibiotic strategy for acute self-limiting upper respiratory tract infections (e.g., acute sore throat, acute cough and acute sinusitis) and mild UTI symptoms.
9. 'Blind' antibiotic prescribing for unexplained pyrexia usually leads to further difficulty in establishing the diagnosis.
10. Limit prescribing over the telephone/eConsult to exceptional cases.
11. Avoid broad spectrum antibiotics (e.g., co-amoxiclav, quinolones and cephalosporins) when narrow spectrum antibiotics remain effective, as they increase the risk of all infections, including Clostridium difficile, MRSA and resistant Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs).
12. Avoid widespread use of topical antibiotics (especially agents also available as systemic preparations, in most cases, topical use should be limited).
13. If diarrhoea or vomiting occurs due to an antibiotic or the illness being treated, the efficacy of hormonal contraception may be impaired and additional precautions should be recommended.
14. Clarithromycin is now recommended over erythromycin, except in pregnancy and breastfeeding. It has fewer side-effects and twice daily rather than four times daily dosing promotes compliance. **Statins should be withheld when macrolide antibiotics are prescribed.**
15. Pregnancy- Prescribers are advised to check prescribing notes in the individual treatment summaries on the RCGP website, [antibiotic and diagnostic quick reference tools](#) for the management of common infections or the BNF when prescribing in pregnancy
16. Annual vaccination is essential for all those at clinical risk of severe influenza. [Visit Annual Flu Programme](#) for further information. For information on Immunisation against infectious disease refer to [The Green Book](#).

Self-Care

Promote self-care where appropriate. Refer to the Self-Care sections highlighted throughout the guideline. Treatments that are often available to purchase over the counter include:

- Analgesics (painkillers) for short-term use
- Topical antifungal treatment for short-term minor ailments
- Cold sore treatment
- Colic treatment
- Cough and cold remedies
- Eye treatments/lubricating products
- Head lice treatment and scabies treatment
- Threadworm tablets
- Topical acne treatment
- Warts and verruca treatment

For further Self-Care information see:

- South East London website: Self Care Section: <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/what-we-do/medicines-optimisation/self-care/>
- South East London website: Self Care (Over the Counter Medicines) – Local Resources: <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/what-we-do/medicines-optimisation/south-east-london-integrated-medicines-optimisation-committee-sel-imoc/self-care-over-the-counter-medicines-local-resources/>
- NHS England Over the counter medication patient information leaflet: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/1a-over-the-counter-leaflet-v1.pdf>
- Self-care Forum website: <https://www.selfcareforum.org/fact-sheets/>
- Patients who are registered with a Southwark GP and entitled to free prescriptions may be eligible to receive treatment free of charge for certain conditions under the Pharmacy First Scheme. For further information please ask patients to check with local pharmacies to see if they are participating in the Pharmacy First Scheme.

Local Medical Infection Teams and Advice and Local Infection Prevention and Control Teams, contactable infections and additional infection specific information

- In persistent, resistant or recurrent infections, failure to respond, advice on second line antibiotics, at risk and clinically vulnerable patients, advice in pregnancy or breastfeeding, contact the local infection teams (see below) for advice.
- For advice on infection control, contact the local Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPCT) listed below.

Additional Infection Specific Information	
Acute exacerbation of COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)	See local guidance on rescue pack information: South East London Integrated Guideline for the Management of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease If a patient is using two or more packs in a year, they need a specialist review. Consider referral to the Integrated Respiratory Team who can be contacted 7 days a week 9am-5pm on 07796 178719 (St Thomas') or 0203 299 6531 (Kings).
MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)	For support in prophylaxis and treatment of MRSA infections contact the local Medical Infection team. For advice on infection control, contact the local Infection Prevention and Control Team (See below). Severe MRSA infections would be better treated in secondary care, on an individual case basis, working closely with the local Infection Prevention and Control Team (See below).

Local Medical Infection Teams and Advice and Local Infection Prevention and Control Teams	
King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Medical Infection team: During working hours: (Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm) Tel. 020 3299 9000 followed by extensions:34360/34358. Out of hours: Call switchboard on 020 3299 9000 and ask to speak to the Microbiology Registrar on call.
	Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPCT) Tel: 020 3299 4374 Email: kch-tr.KCH-IC-Nurses@nhs.net
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust	Medical Infection team: During working hours: (Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm) Tel: 0207 188 3100 or call 0207 188 7188 (switchboard) Out of hours: Call switchboard on 0207 188 7188 and ask to speak to the Microbiology Registrar on call.
	Infection Prevention and Control Team Tel: 020 7188 followed by extensions:(3153)/(3154)/(3155).

Contactable Infections:	
For advice on rabies prophylaxis	Contact the South London Health Protection Team: 0344 326 2052 or via phe.slhpt@nhs.net or slhpt.oncall@phe.gov.uk .
Prevention of secondary case of meningitis (prophylaxis)	

Southwark Interim Antibiotic Guidelines

Clinicians are advised to refer to the RCGP antibiotic and diagnostic quick reference tool page for a [condensed summary table](#) of antimicrobial prescribing and individual treatment summaries on managing common infections. Please see a link to this guidance [here](#).

Additional resources are also available:

- [Stewardship tools, audits and posters](#) – RCGP TARGET antibiotics toolkit hub
- You can find a range of information, clinical guidelines and practice resources as well as general patient information on [the South East London Integrated Medicines Optimisation Committee \(SEL IMOC\) pages](#), including clinical guidelines, clinical pathways, shared care guidance and formulary recommendations.