


Rethinking

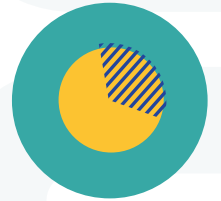
Antibiotic Prescriptions

Updated: November 2022

1 Look it up to get it right

Up to 30% of antibiotic prescriptions in community are for:

- × Wrong dose
- × Wrong length of therapy
- × Wrong drug
- × A viral infection 



2 Weigh the risks and benefits

Up to 25% of people taking antibiotics have side effects

- Common side effects: diarrhea, nausea, headache, rash, and antibiotic resistance
- Rare, but serious side effects: kidney and liver damage, and *C. difficile* infection



3 Choose the shortest effective course of therapy

Shorter courses are often just as effective, with fewer side effects

- Cystitis (3-5 days)
- Cellulitis (5 days)
- Community acquired pneumonia (5 days)
- Otitis media (5 days)*
*In kids over 2 years old
- Acute sinusitis (5 days)[†]
[†]In adults

Choosing Wisely: The Cold Standard Toolkit. (2021). <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/toolkit/the-cold-standard/>



4 Investigate penicillin allergies

While ~10% of patients report a penicillin allergy, only 1% are truly allergic

- Refer for allergy testing, as appropriate
- Most people who are truly allergic can safely take a cephalosporin

AAAAI: Penicillin Allergy FAQ. (2022). <https://www.aaaai.org/tools-for-the-public/conditions-library/allergies/penicillin-allergy-faq>

Patients who get second-line drugs are more likely to have side effects and treatment failure



5 Talk about prevention

Avoid the need for antibiotics by encouraging:

- Hand washing
- Vaccination
- Cough/sneeze into a sleeve

