

Have a patient who insists on taking an antibiotic for a viral acute upper respiratory infection?

Here's what you can do.



Make it clear that antibiotics are NOT effective

Antibiotics are not effective at treating acute upper respiratory infections, bronchitis (chest colds) or bronchiolitis because they won't cure a viral infection.

Use language patients can clearly understand

Try to avoid using bronchitis, bronchiolitis or other medical diagnostic language when talking to patients. Saying "chest cold" can be less alarming and may set a different patient expectation for treatment. The materials in this toolkit offer additional ways to help you speak with your patients about safe antibiotic usage.

Mention some of the serious side effects of antibiotics

Nausea, upset stomach, diarrhea, or loss of appetite

Kills helpful bacteria in your body

Creates antibiotic-resistant bacteria such as MRSA, a type of flesh-eating bacteria

May increase the risk of serious diseases (e.g., autoimmune disorder)

Remind them of the best ways to treat upper respiratory infections

Chest colds typically improve after a week to 10 days. Speed up recovery by:

- Staying well hydrated
- Getting plenty of sleep
- Keeping a humidifier in your bedroom

Suggest over-the-counter treatments to help alleviate some symptoms

- Cough suppressants (dextromethorphan)
- First-generation antihistamines (Diphenhydramine)
- Decongestants (phenylephrine)

If the patient still thinks an antibiotic will help them feel better:

If patients are insistent, or there is diagnostic uncertainty, consider a prescription dated three (3) days in the future and tell the patient to fill it if their symptoms don't improve.



The following entities, which serve the noted regions, are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association: *Western and Northeastern PA:* Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Highmark Choice Company, Highmark Health Insurance Company, Highmark Coverage Advantage Inc., Highmark Benefits Group Inc., First Priority Health, First Priority Life or Highmark Senior Health Company. *Central and Southeastern PA:* Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Shield, Highmark Benefits Group Inc., Highmark Health Insurance Company, Highmark Choice Company or Highmark Senior Health Company. *Delaware:* Highmark BCBSD Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. *West Virginia:* Highmark West Virginia Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Highmark Health Insurance Company or Highmark Senior Solutions Company. *Western NY:* Highmark Western and Northeastern New York Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. *Northeastern NY:* Highmark Western and Northeastern New York Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Shield. All references to "Highmark" in this document are references to the Highmark company that is providing the member's health benefits or health benefit administration and/or to one or more of its affiliated Blue companies.