

# Are patients pressuring you?



## Tips for discussing antibiotics

Patients may pressure physicians, intentionally or unintentionally, into prescribing antibiotics based on their past experiences, cultural norms, misinformation, and desire to get better. When visiting the doctor, patients want to be heard, validated, and want something to make them feel better. Helping your patients avoid unnecessary antibiotics is important for patient outcomes and to slow antibiotic resistance.

**30% of antibiotics prescribed in doctors' offices and emergency departments are unnecessary.\***

### Foreshadowing

- Prescribers can **foreshadow a non-antibiotic treatment outcome** throughout the patient visit by using strategies like deflecting or diagnostic projections to a viral diagnosis. This can help ease patient expectations when it comes to diagnosis and treatment options, leading to less pushback during these stages of the visit.

### Affirmative counseling

- **Framing the recommendations affirmatively** (i.e., what can be done) can help patients react less negatively towards a treatment plan.
- Using phrases like "There's a medication that will help called..." and "Fortunately, you don't need an antibiotic..." instead of a negative frame such as "Antibiotics won't help you" can help positively redirect patients' mindset.

## Sufficient explanations

- **Patients may not understand** why they do not need antibiotics. They may not know the difference between viral and bacterial infections or understand the risks of antibiotics. Taking the time to explain the differences, aligning their symptoms to a viral diagnosis, and accounting for nonantibiotic treatment can help ease patient concerns and expectations.
- **Give your patients clear expectations** on when they should start feeling better, and when to come back to the doctor if they are not. If you have the time, calling to follow up can help make patients feel confident in your decision and establish trust over time.
- Providers may have to **engage in persuasive strategies** if faced with resistance from patients. Providers can share additional arguments to support their position and provide partial accommodations or concessions (i.e. additional tests) to ease patient expectations.

## Consider alternate therapies

- Oftentimes, patients have an expectation to receive a prescription to help their symptoms. Suggesting alternative over-the-counter therapies or other medications can help your patients' symptoms and help them feel satisfied with the visit.
- Other options, such as a doctor's note, can help your patient feel like they got something out of the visit and help them leave satisfied without an antibiotic.

### References

- [\\*www.cdc.gov/sixteenteen/hai/index.htm#:~:text=More%20than%202.8%20million%20antibiotic,hospitals%20are%20inappropriate%20or%20unnecessary.](http://www.cdc.gov/sixteenteen/hai/index.htm#:~:text=More%20than%202.8%20million%20antibiotic,hospitals%20are%20inappropriate%20or%20unnecessary.)
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