

Quality use of medicines requires professional knowledge and skills around diagnosis of symptoms, available management options including medicines and other alternatives, appropriate monitoring of treatment, all underpinned by good communication with patients to allow shared decision making to occur.

### Risks and benefits of prescribing antibiotics

Inappropriate prescribing of antibiotics increases the risk of developing antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria in the patient which can be spread to family and the community, puts the patient at risk of adverse reactions to the antibiotic, and incurs increased cost to the health system and consumer.

Antibiotics should only be used when the benefits to the patient are likely to be significant – in this case the right antibiotic should be chosen (narrow rather than broad spectrum), and treatment should continue for the specified duration for the condition.

Common conditions encountered in the community in which antibiotics have no or very limited effect include:

- common colds
- acute rhino-sinusitis
- acute bronchitis
- tonsillitis
- acute middle ear infections (otitis media) in non-Aboriginal populations – NB. treatment guidelines for acute middle ear infections in *Aboriginal populations* differ due to higher risk of chronic ear infections impairing hearing - see the [CARPA manual](#) or [Dept of Health guideline](#) for details on treatment of acute and chronic ear infections

Managing patient expectations about duration of illness and whether antibiotics are indicated are important parts of quality use of antibiotics. Below is a list of resources that may be useful.

### Medicines information

- The **Antibiotic Therapeutic Guideline** is available in print copy – the online version is available to staff working at Victorian ACCHS by free registration through [Clinicians Health Channel](#).
- **Australian Medicines Handbook** is also available in print copy, with an online version available to Victorian ACCHS staff by free registration through [Clinicians Health Channel](#).
- [CARPA manual](#) or [Dept of Health guideline](#) for details on treatment of acute and chronic ear infections

### National Prescribing Service (NPS) – information and CPD

The NPS provides information about medicines, quality prescribing and diagnostic testing for health professionals and consumers, including consumer medication information leaflets. It has information on [antibiotic prescribing for respiratory tract infections](#) for professionals including resources for consumers on appropriately not prescribing antibiotics. CPD options coming soon include a case study on reducing antibiotic resistance, and an updated clinical e-audit following the release of new antibiotic guidelines.

### Medicare - PIP – Quality Prescribing Incentive Guidelines

There are financial incentives for practices to participate in activities related to quality prescribing through the Practice Incentives Program – see [here](#) for the guidelines. Most activities are run by the NPS, and are eligible for CPD points for participants.

### Medicare: PBS Copayment for Aboriginal People

Aboriginal patients with or at risk of chronic disease may register for the [PBS co-payment](#) to reduce or remove the cost of PBS medication. Financial barriers may be in issue reducing the quality use of medicines.