We heal and inspire the human spirit.

To: PCPs, Specialists, UCs, & IPAs

From: IEHP – Provider Relations

Date: November 5, 2026

Subject: **Appropriate Use of Antibiotics in Common Respiratory Infections**

With cold and flu season here, IEHP appreciates your commitment to evidence-based prescribing practices. National guidelines emphasize that antibiotics should not be used for uncomplicated acute bronchitis or most upper respiratory infections, which are typically viral and resolve without antibiotics.

Key Patient Communication Strategies

- **Support Symptom Management**
  – Recommend OTC remedies for cough, congestion, fever, and aches.
  – Encourage rest and hydration.
- **Set Recovery Expectations**
  – Acute bronchitis cough may last 2–3 weeks (up to 6 weeks).
  – Most cold symptoms improve in 1–2 weeks.
- **Review Follow-Up Guidelines ("red flags"):**
  – Fever over 5 days or ≥104°F (40°C).
  – Shortness of breath or chest pain.
  – Worsening symptoms after initial improvement.
  – Severe weakness or inability to keep fluids down.

Responding to Common Requests for Antibiotics

- *"Antibiotics worked before."*
  – Explain natural recovery is likely the cause of improvement, not antibiotics.
- *"I don't have time to be sick."*
  – Offer symptom-management for quicker relief.
- *"What if it turns into pneumonia?"*
  – Review specific warning signs and provide follow-up plan.
- *"Just in case?"*
  – Reinforce that unnecessary antibiotics carry risks (side effects, C. diff, antimicrobial resistance) without improving viral symptoms.

Quality Learning Guide

For best practices on the Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment for Acute Bronchitis/Bronchiolitis (AAB) performance measure, visit: www.providerservices.iehp.org > Programs & Services> Provider Incentive Programs > Quality Performance Learning Guide > Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment for Acute Bronchitis/Bronchiolitis (AAB)

You can access the CDPH/IEHP Antibiotic Stewardship Toolkit and its supplemental resources by scanning the QR code or by following the links provided below:



1. CDPH and IEHP Pilot Stewardship Collaboration and Toolkit
2. CDPH/IEHP Core Outpatient & ED ASP Toolkit

An antibiotic brochure for members is available on our website at IEHP.org > Learning Center > Staying Healthy > Kids and Teens > Antibiotics: Know when to use them

If you have any questions or to request materials for your practice, please contact the IEHP Provider Call Center at (909) 890-2054, (866) 223-4347 or email ProviderServices@iehp.org

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