

Using Antibiotics Wisely

The Impact of COVID-19 on Antibiotic Prescribing in Canadian Primary Care

Unnecessary antibiotic use is a direct contributor to antimicrobial resistance—one of the top 10 threats to global health. Respiratory tract infections (RTI) and urinary tract infections (UTI) are the leading causes of avoidable antimicrobial use in primary care.

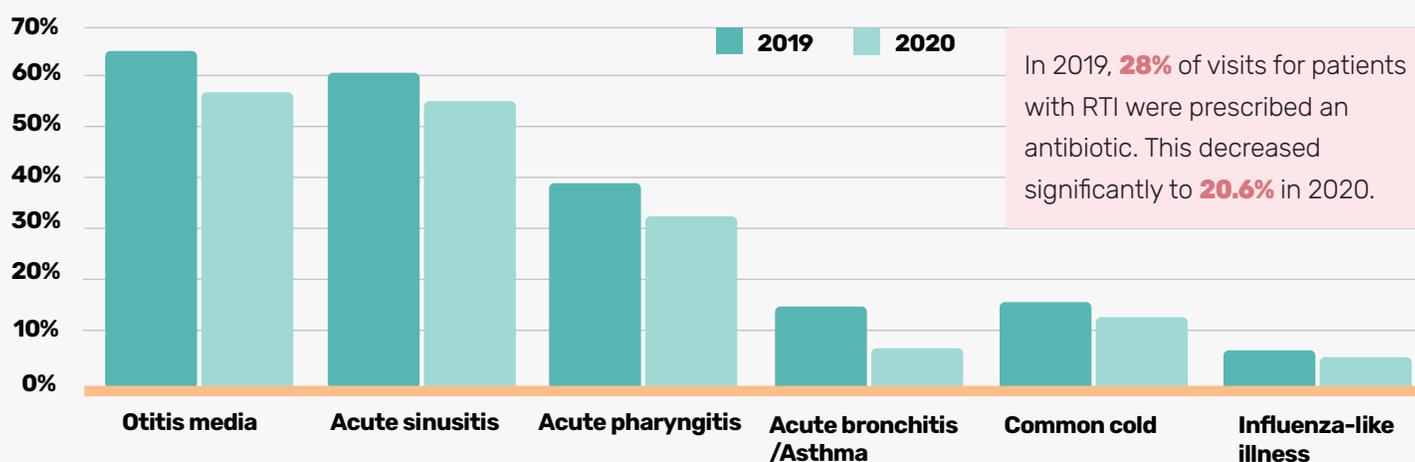
The Canadian Primary Care Sentinel Surveillance Network (CPCSSN) and Choosing Wisely Canada assessed baseline prescription patterns of antibiotics before and during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada.

What we found:

We measured oral antibiotic prescribing for patients who had a primary care visit (virtual or in-person) for RTI.

1,300 primary care clinicians and **1,107,121** patients with least one visit to primary care in 2019 and 2020 were included.

Prescribing by syndrome:



Among primary care providers who are in highest quartile of prescribers compared to their peers, antibiotic prescribing for RTI dropped from **35%** in 2019 to **26.8%** in 2020.

The entire analysis was repeated for UTI. In comparison, antibiotic prescribing for visits related to UTI increased marginally from **71.6%** in 2019 to **72.3%** in 2020.

What this means:

This report highlights that antibiotics are often prescribed for RTIs in primary care. There was a decrease in antibiotic prescribing for RTI across primary care likely related to the pandemic. Approximately **16,000** fewer patients received an antibiotic prescription in 2020.

Extrapolating our findings to the Canadian population of 38 million, there would be almost **100,000** fewer patients prescribed an antibiotic for RTI in primary care.

To view the full report:

www.cpcssn.ca/publications

For more information on Using Antibiotics Wisely:

www.choosingwiselycanada.org/primary-care/antibiotics

