Key message Issue 29 **Sept 2026**

Supporting Self-Care and Appropriate Antibiotic Use for Respiratory Infections

This winter, a key priority is to support patients in managing viral and self-limiting respiratory tract infections through effective self-care advice.

Most coughs, colds, sinus infections, and sore throats improve without antibiotics, and recovery is often similar whether antibiotics are prescribed or not. The presence of green or yellow mucus alone is not a reliable indicator of bacterial infection or the need for antibiotics.

GPs can help empower patients with symptom-management advice:

- Adequate rest and good hydration.
- Paracetamol, or ibuprofen where appropriate, for pain and fever relief.
- Saline nasal rinses, sprays, or drops, which can help reduce symptom severity and duration and may decrease antibiotic use.

Clear conversations about self-care can help improve patient confidence, support recovery, empower patients for future occurrences and ensure antibiotics are used only when clinically indicated.

When antibiotics are not needed immediately, use the *Treat Your Respiratory Tract Infection* leaflet and the CHESTSSS consultation model. Download the leaflet from antibioticprescribing.ie or order copies via hcai.amrteam@hse.ie. Details about CHESTSSS are available in Forum October 2025.