



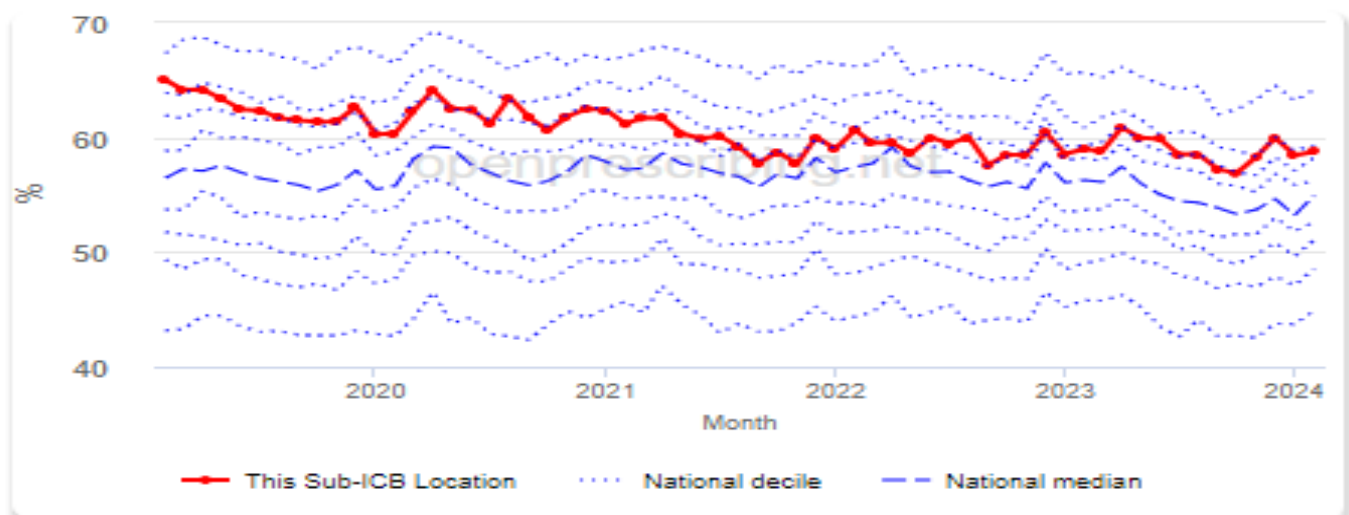
Shorter Courses of Antibiotics are Better!

The optimal duration of antibiotic therapy has been a matter of some debate, and increasingly, research is showing that shorter durations are just as effective as longer courses for many infections. It is for this reason that shorter courses are now being advocated by NICE for the following areas.

Lower Urinary Tract Infections

[NICE guidance on prescribing for lower urinary-tract infections](#) recommends a three day course of antibiotics for most women. Prescribing longer courses may be unnecessary, and also cost more. There are however some groups, such as males and pregnant patients, where longer durations are recommended. In Northamptonshire clinicians are comparatively high prescribers of longer courses of antibiotics for UTIs.

Proportion of commonly used antibiotics for urinary-tract infections prescribed for more than 3 days



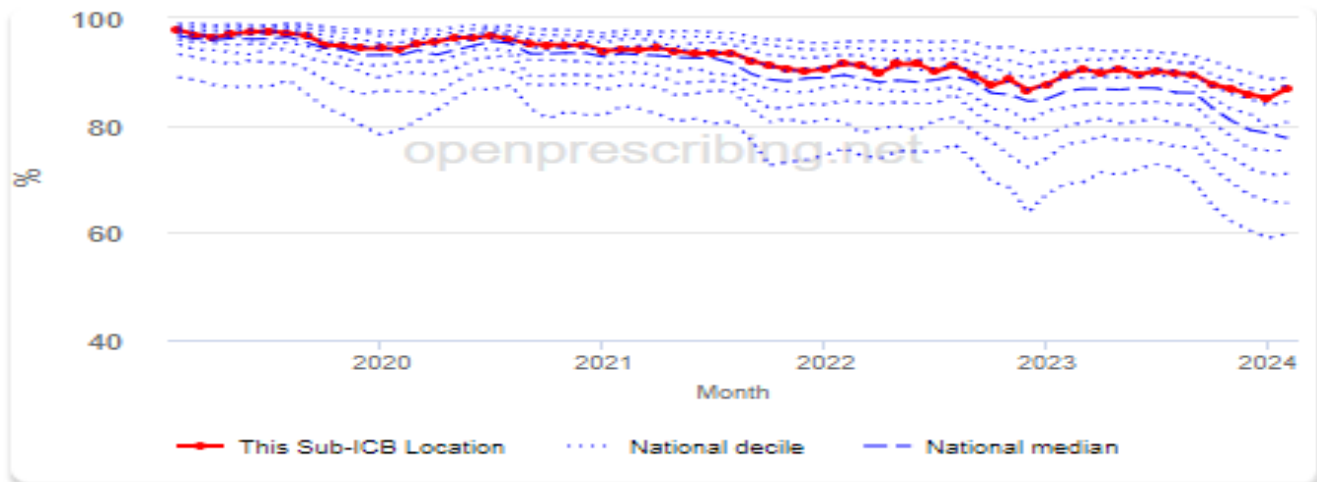
Doxycycline Prescribing

The most common indication for the prescribing of doxycycline in primary care is the treatment of respiratory-tract infections. NICE guidance recommends five-day courses when antibiotics are indicated for sinusitis, sore throat, COPD infective exacerbation, cough (acute), pneumonia (community-acquired) and otitis media. For doxycycline this would be 200mg on the first day, then 100mg once a day for 4 days (5-day course in total) requiring a total of 6 capsules/dispersible tablets. Where greater than 5 days treatment is prescribed for these indications, this increases both the unnecessary exposure to antibiotics, as well as cost. There are some indications which require higher doses/longer durations of doxycycline, e.g. treatment of infected leg ulcers.

NHS England National Medicines Optimisation Opportunities for 2023/24 identify use of the shortest effective antibiotic courses as an area for improvement. In Northamptonshire clinicians are comparatively high prescribers of longer courses of doxycycline.



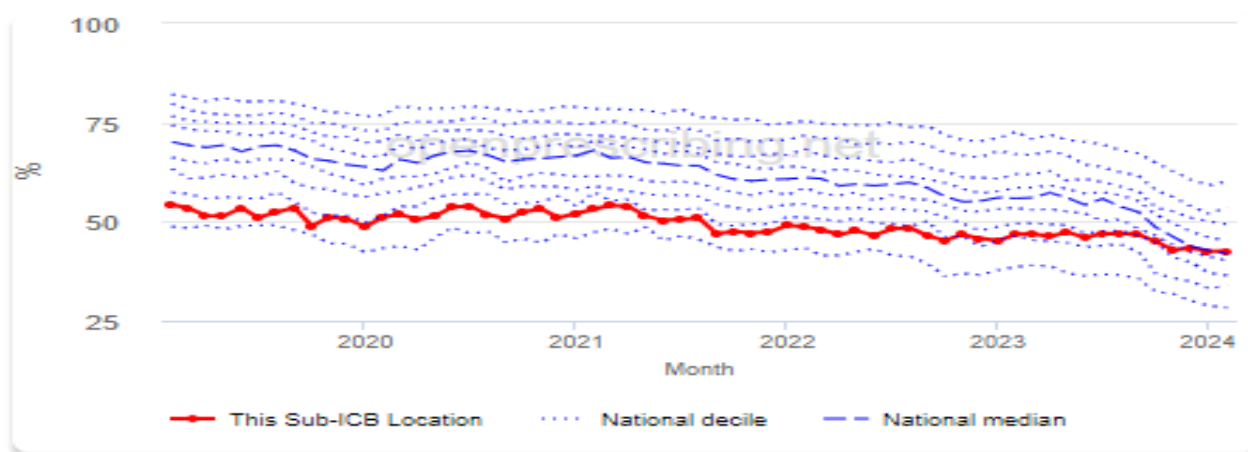
Proportion of prescription items of doxycycline 100mg capsules with quantity greater than 6 capsules/dispersible tablets



Amoxicillin Prescribing

The most common indication for the prescribing of amoxicillin in primary care is the treatment of respiratory-tract infections. NICE guidance recommends for example that, where amoxicillin is used for cough, the dose is 500mg three times a day for 5 days. Where greater than 5 days treatment is prescribed for these indications, this increases both the unnecessary prescribing of antibiotics, as well as cost. There are however some indications which require higher doses/longer durations of amoxicillin for example, treatment of *H. pylori*. NHS England National Medicines Optimisation Opportunities for 2023/24 identify use of the shortest effective antibiotic courses as an area for improvement and suggests that 75% of amoxicillin prescriptions should be 5-day courses by March 2024.

Proportion of prescription items of amoxicillin 500mg capsules with quantity greater than 15 capsules



Summary

Primary care clinicians are encouraged to consider prescribing shorter course of antibiotics for:

- 3 day courses for uncomplicated lower UTIs in non-pregnant women aged 16 years and over
- 5 day courses of doxycycline and amoxicillin in the treatment of respiratory-tract infections