

Example of GPs script:

Patient contribution

Morning.

Anything else?

Mostly here about your chest, then.

Aside from your chest and your aches, was there anything that you wanted me to address today?

ICE

What do you think is behind all of this?

We're not thinking that could be anything particularly nasty about this?

Good, so you're thinking probably flu, was there anything that was on your mind that you were worried about?

Was there anything else that you were particularly wanting me to do, except for considering antibiotics?

Because you're not here on your own, I'm also going to ask your wife what she would like me to do for you?

PSO

You're not a smoker?

Oh well done, when did you stop?

And domestically, you live with your wife.

You're not a big drinker or anything like that?

Well, we can talk about that, if you'd like.

In terms of your alcohol consumption, how many pints would you drink in an average week?

Okay so total of nine pints in a week, and if you're concerned about that and think it's something worth addressing, we'll come back to that.

Red flags

Can I check you've not been coughing up any blood?

Do you feel breathless with it?

And your weight's been steady?

Focussed history

So, a couple of years ago you had the flu. I noticed from looking back on your records that you saw Dr Coyne, and that was, what, a couple of months ago with a chest infection.

Okay, that was better, and you had no symptoms for at least a month before coming back with this?

Generally speaking, how is your chest usually?

You're not prone to chest problems?

I've noticed you use a walking stick.

Do you feel breathless with it?

Is that normal for you?

So that's not really changed a great deal; so no more breathless than usual?

Yeah, okay. But you get about alright?

What colour's your spit at the moment?

You're not wheezy at all?

You've never had asthma before?

Focussed examination

Would you mind slipping your jumper and your jacket off for me, and then we'll check you over.

Do you want to - if you turn yourself round we're going to listen to the back of your chest, if that's okay. Breathe away. Lovely. No pain in your face at all?

With you being an ex-smoker, would you mind doing this blowing test for me?

Deep breath in, and blow hard and fast. You're going to put your lips right around the outside of that pipe and blow hard. Good numbers, so 420, that's really good. Take yourself a seat, and I'm going to check your temperature and your oxygen levels. We'll get you to put yourself back together in a second. So, on your finger there if you wouldn't mind, and that's going to check your temperature. Your temperature's good, your oxygen levels are good, your pulse is normal. Okay, pop your jumper back on.

Identify problem and explain diagnosis

So, I think that this is a flu-like illness.

I think you're absolutely right. Your chest is okay at the moment, and you're coughing up some yellowy-green phlegm at the moment.

Check understanding

Does that all make sense? Do you have any questions?

Develops management plan / shares management plan

So, antibiotics don't usually help at this stage of an illness to be fair, under most circumstances, but there are circumstances where we would think of antibiotics for you.

No, absolutely, and I know that you weren't expecting antibiotics, but the government is encouraging me to offer people who've got flu-like illnesses at this time of year an anti-viral treatment that you can take. But, it gives you very marginal benefits, so it might draw the end of the illness by about half a day. So, marginal benefits. So, it's worthwhile taking symptomatic treatment to help you with the fever, so we're talking about things like paracetamol. Have you ever used ibuprofen?

You're not prone to ulcers in your stomach? And you don't have high blood pressure or anything like that?

So, ibuprofen you could use, and it's more effective for a fever, but it is slightly more risky for the stomach, so you might want to stick to paracetamol in the first instance. So, 2 tablets of paracetamol four times a day, which your wife has been using, and that will help control your fever. From the point of view of: 'do you need antibiotics or not', well, what I would suggest you think about is that we give you antibiotics if your temperature is persistently high and your coughing up a lot of coloured spit and your chest is getting worse. So, maybe we should be thinking about that if you're continuing to be poorly. Now, most people with a flu-like illness will find that the first two days are the worst, you have a fever that comes and goes, but will generally improve, but the cough will stay with you for two or three weeks.

Safety net and follow up

So, what you could do is I could give you a rescue course of antibiotics and if you're finding that you've got a persistent fever – and I'm partially suggesting this because you had a chest infection two months ago. If you're finding you've got a persistent fever that's not improved after two or three days, you might choose to take the antibiotics. Is it worthwhile me giving you some of those? Are there any antibiotics that don't suit you?

I don't think you need antibiotics at this stage, but with it being Christmas coming up, you may find it difficult to access a doctor if you were getting worse, then I could give you some standby antibiotics, and you don't cash them in. You could always access a chemist over the weekend and then you could cash in the prescription in, if and when you needed it. Would that be helpful to you?

So, these antibiotics need to be taken after food, all right? I can't give you amoxicillin, because amoxicillin is not the most effective after a flu-like illness if it goes to your chest. So we would give you something like doxycycline, and doxycycline needs to be taken after food and you need to drink plenty with it, but don't lie down straight after taking it. Okay?

All antibiotics have a potential for causing diarrhoea, and we usually recommend that when taking an antibiotic, you think about using a probiotic at the same time. That could be a capsule from a health food shop, or it could be a probiotic yoghurt if you prefer. You've got those options.

Drink plenty of fluids, eat. But if you're poorly with this, you've got a persistent fever, then it would be reasonable to use the antibiotics, and if you're getting worse we should see you urgently.

And I'll give you a standby prescription of a tablet called doxycycline, which is an antibiotic, but I'll ask you not to cash it in.

Yeah, well it sounds like you had a rough time last night, doesn't it? If you have persistent chest symptoms, we ought to do a chest x-ray, which is one of the things that Dr Coyne talked about, last time she saw you. But I think that at the moment, there's probably no need to do that.

Well you might be prone, in the winter times, to having a bit of bronchitis, but if you've got persistent symptoms then we ought to think about doing a chest x-ray, doing a blowing test - a special blowing test. The blowing test that you did today is slightly different to the one I'd recommend if you're having continued problems in the winter.