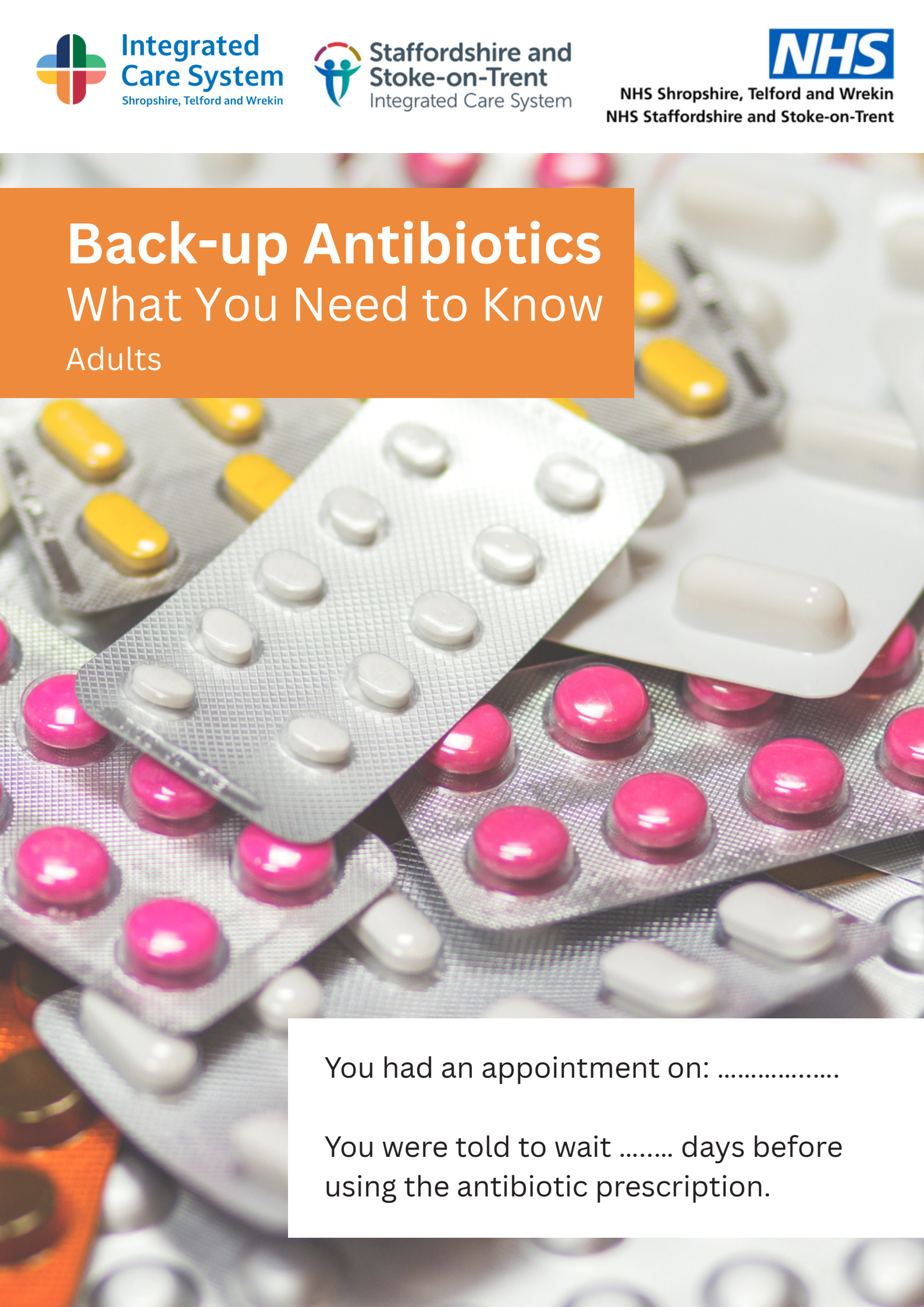




Back-up Antibiotics

What You Need to Know

Adults

You had an appointment on:

You were told to wait days before
using the antibiotic prescription.

In this leaflet, when we say 'prescriber,' we mean a doctor, nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare worker.

What is a back-up antibiotic prescription?

Antibiotics are medicines used to fight some infections.

A back-up prescription means a prescriber has given you an antibiotic prescription, but feels you should wait to see if it is needed. This helps make sure antibiotics are only used when really needed – so they keep working well in the future.

Why have I been given a back-up antibiotic prescription?

The prescriber has checked you carefully and thinks you might have an infection.

If you are healthy most of the time, your body's own defences (immune system) will often help you get better on your own, from:

- Colds
- Most coughs
- Sore throats
- Earache

Most of these are caused by viruses.

Antibiotics don't work for viruses, and your body can fight some infections without them. You should only collect the antibiotic if you:

- **Get worse, or**
- **Don't start to feel better** after the number of days the prescriber told you to wait.



Why not use antibiotics straight away?

Antibiotics can cause problems like:

- Upset tummy
- Diarrhoea (runny poo)
- Feeling sick
- Skin rashes

Using antibiotics when they're not needed can make germs stronger, which means the antibiotic might not work for you when you really need it. This is called antibiotic resistance.

To find out more about antibiotic resistance, visit:

www.nhs.uk/medicines/antibiotics/antibiotic-antimicrobial-resistance

When will I feel better?

Most people start to feel better in a few days without antibiotics. Some symptoms can take longer to go away:



Middle-ear infection

3 days, but can last
up to 8 days



Sore throat

7 to 8 days



Sinusitis

14 to 21 days



Common cold

14 days



Cough or bronchitis

3 to 4 weeks

You probably won't need to take the antibiotic if:

- You are **not getting worse**
- and **slowly improving**

How long should I wait before using the antibiotic?

The prescriber will tell you how many days to wait. For example: "Wait 3 days. If you aren't feeling better by then, start the antibiotic".

What if I have or get new or worrying symptoms?

The prescriber will tell you what signs to look out for. If you get worse or you're worried, get help from:

- Your GP
- NHS 111
- Your local pharmacy
 - To find your local pharmacy, visit: www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy
- A&E or call 999 (for emergencies)

You can also find out more about new or worrying symptoms here: <https://ggr.sh/Ewzb>.

You know what feels right for you. If something doesn't feel right, get help.

How do I get the antibiotic if I need it?

The prescriber will explain how to get the medicine.

You might:

- Get a paper prescription to take to the pharmacy
- Be told to pick up a prescription from your GP surgery
- Be given a token which is for an electronic prescription. Take the token to a pharmacy



What if I don't need the antibiotic?

If you feel better, **don't collect or use the antibiotic**. If you already have the paper prescription, you can:

- Tear it up or shred it
- Return it to your GP practice

If you already have the antibiotic medicine, you can return it to your local pharmacy. They will throw it away safely.

Don't save the paper prescription or the antibiotic medicine for later – it might not be the right medicine next time and could also stop the antibiotic working when you really need it.

Where can I get more advice?

You can get more advice from:

- NHS: www.nhs.uk
- RCGP Learning: <https://ggr.sh/Ewzb>