

Dear patient....

As you will be aware, widespread inappropriate antibiotic prescribing is driving a rise in antimicrobial resistance that threatens our ability to treat many infections. This resistance causes antibiotics to become ineffective in treating infection even when they are being prescribed correctly. Therefore, your medical team and your local community pharmacyare working together to help tackle the problem.

Viruses cause most coughs, colds and other respiratory tract infections. Antibiotics do not work against viruses and will not reduce symptoms. In these cases antibiotic use not only causes our bodies to develop resistance but is also likely to cause potential adverse events. Until recently it has been very difficult to assess whether an infection is viral or bacterial just by examination and hence accurately decide the right course of treatment.

However, technology has now become available which allows the measurement of levels of a substance called C-reactive protein (CRP) to be made. Unusually high CRP levels appear in the blood as part of the body's natural response to bacterial, but not viral infection. So, used alongside assessments of signs, symptoms and history taking, the test can help antibiotics be prescribed more effectively, hence reducing the risk of resistance and side effects.

.....pharmacy now has access to CRP testing on a trial basis for the first time. The test is free and takes 3 minutes to perform and can be done during your consultation at the pharmacy. Only a tiny drop of blood from the finger is needed-very quick and painless.

The test accurately measures the amount of CRP circulating in your body. If your infection is due to a virus-a score of less than 10-your pharmacist will recommend the most appropriate course of treatment for you from those available in the pharmacy. If your score is higher than 10 your pharmacist will provide you with a print out of the result, and recommend the next steps in terms of contact with your doctor.

The practice is pleased to be participating in this trial, and is fully aware of the pharmacy project and of the CRP test scores, so that they can effectively respond to any follow-up recommendations.

.....pharmacy will be pleased to see you to perform the test at your earliest convenience.