

## Turning Back the Tide of Antibiotic Resistance, One (Unfilled) Prescription at a Time

According to JUCM's own chart research, antibiotics are the most-prescribed class of medications in urgent care. This is not surprising, given that six of the top 10 presenting complaints in urgent care encompass possible diagnoses for which an antibiotic could be an appropriate choice.<sup>1</sup>

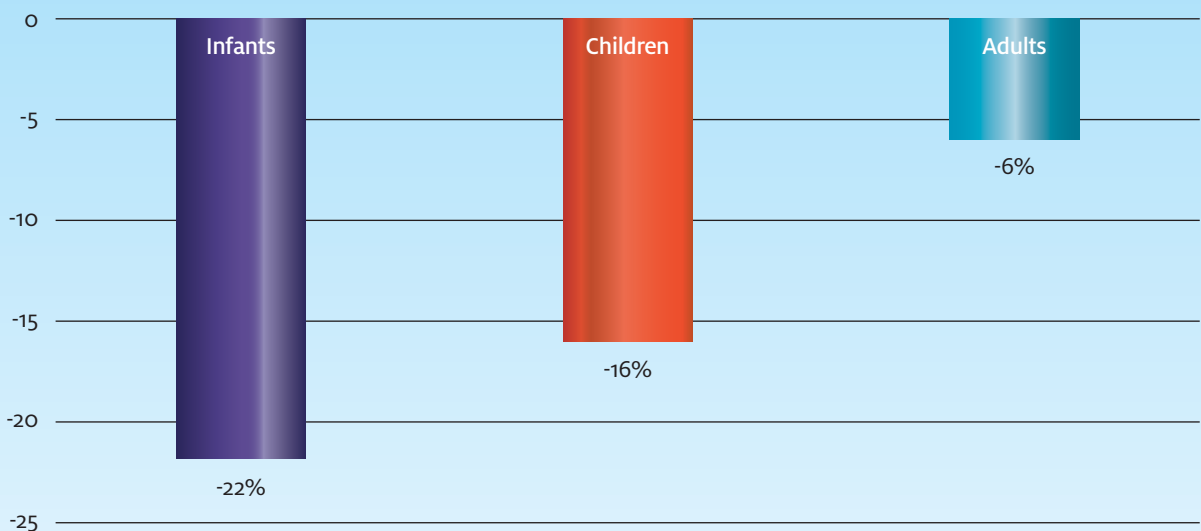
Still, there's no denying that antibiotics have been overprescribed across the board—in retail clinics, emergency rooms, traditional primary care offices, and urgent care. This was clearly validated in a research letter published in 2018 by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.<sup>2</sup> And it's why JUCM focused so much of this issue's content on the crucial subject of antibiotic stewardship. The Urgent Care Association and the College of Urgent Care Medicine have answered the call by teaming up with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to recognize urgent care operators who demonstrate compliance with certain standards of responsible antibiotic use (ie, the Core Elements of Outpatient Antibiotic Stewardship).

Here's the interesting thing, though: The healthcare industry started tracking its own progress in reducing unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions even before the scope of the problem was known—and had started corrective action. A study conducted by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association showed a *downward trend* in antibiotic prescribing in the U.S. between 2010 and 2016.<sup>3</sup> Check out the chart below—and reflect on the potential antibiotic-resistance-related deaths that have been prevented with each prescription that *wasn't* filled. ■

### References

1. *The Journal of Urgent Care Medicine*. 2019 Urgent Care Chart Survey.
2. Palms DL, Hicks LA, Bartoces M. Comparison of antibiotic prescribing in retail clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, and traditional ambulatory care settings in the United States. *JAMA Network*. September 2018. Available at: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2687524>. Accessed October 10, 2020.
3. Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Antibiotic prescription fill rates declining in the U.S. Available at: <https://www.bcbs.com/the-health-of-america/reports/antibiotic-prescription-rates-declining-in-the-US>. Accessed October 10, 2020.

### REDUCTION IN ANTIBIOTIC PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED, 2010–2016



Data source: Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Antibiotic prescription fill rates declining in the U.S. Available at: <https://www.bcbs.com/the-health-of-america/reports/antibiotic-prescription-rates-declining-in-the-US>. Accessed October 10, 2020.