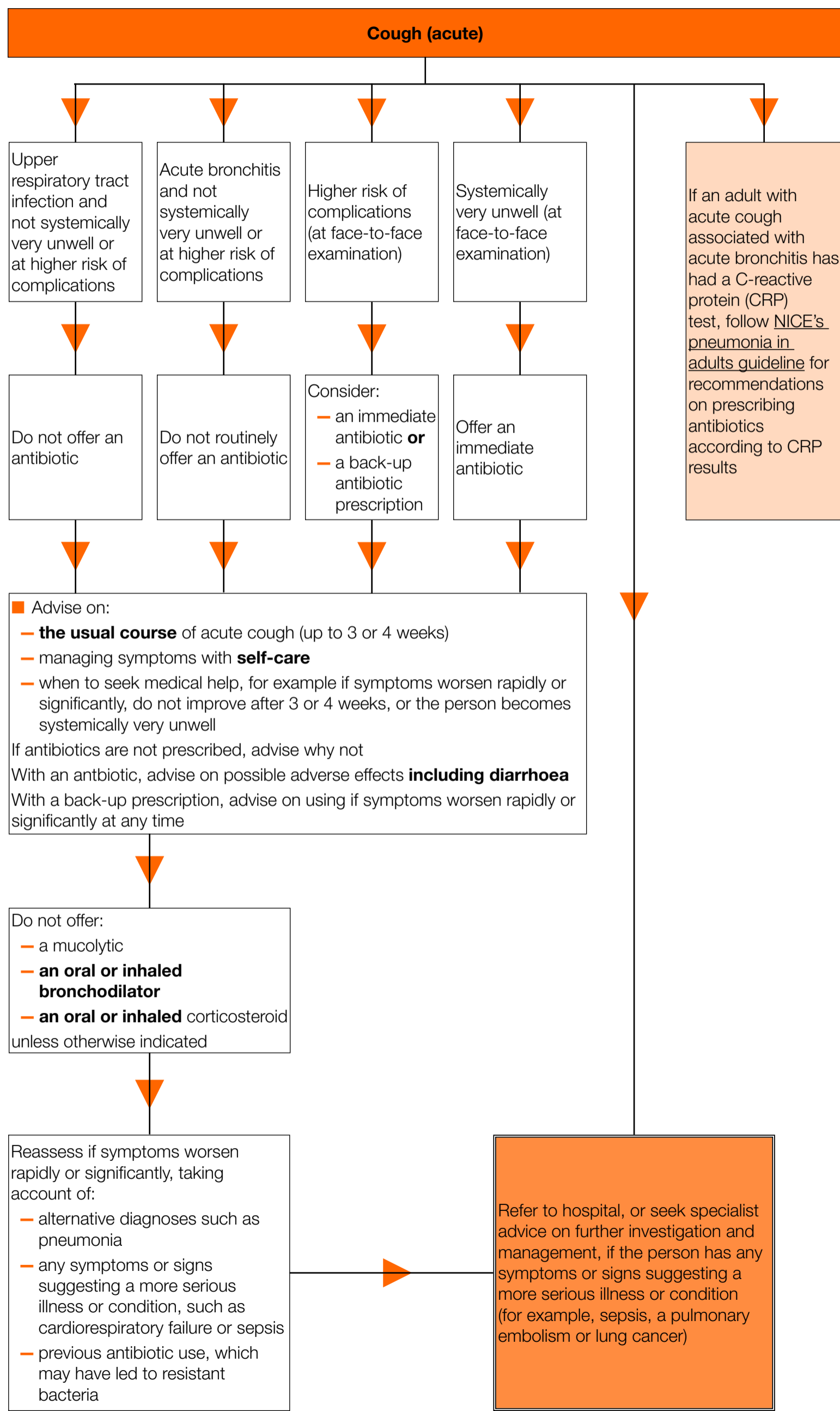


NICE uses 'offer' when there is more certainty of benefit and 'consider' when evidence of benefit is less clear.



Self-care

Some people may wish to try the following, which have limited evidence of benefit for the relief of cough symptoms:

- honey (in people aged over 1 year)
- pelargonium (herbal medicine; in people aged 12 and over)
- over-the-counter cough medicines containing the expectorant guaifenesin (in people aged 12 and over)
- over-the-counter cough medicines containing cough suppressants, except codeine, (in people aged 12 and over with non-persistent cough and without excessive secretions)

Limited evidence suggests antihistamines, decongestants and cough medicines containing codeine do not help cough symptoms

Background

- Acute coughs are usually self-limiting but can last up to 3 to 4 weeks
- Antibiotics make little difference to how long a cough lasts
- Usually caused by a viral upper respiratory tract infection, such as a cold or flu
- Also caused by acute bronchitis (a lower respiratory tract infection), which is usually viral but can be bacterial

Higher risk of complications:

- People with a pre-existing comorbidity
- Young children born prematurely
- People older than 65 years with 2 or more of the following, or older than 80 years with 1 or more of the following:
 - hospitalisation in previous year
 - type 1 or type 2 diabetes
 - history of congestive heart failure
 - current use of oral corticosteroids