



BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama

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Pediatricians Leading the Way as Antibiotic Prescription Rates Decline in Alabama

BIRMINGHAM, AL – Antibiotic prescription fill rates are declining in Alabama and nationally, and pediatricians are leading the way. Appropriate prescribing of antibiotics is critically important because the overuse or misuse of antibiotics can render the drug ineffective over time and allow diseases to build resistance against antibiotic treatments.

ALABAMA:

According to a new study by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA), Alabama ranks second among states in the rate of antibiotic prescription fill rates among Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama commercially insured members; however, Alabama's fill rates have declined eight percent over the last seven years. The study further shows this decline varies largely by city, from a 22 percent decline in Anniston to a one percent decline in Auburn/Opelika and Florence.

Prescription fill rates for broad-spectrum antibiotics, which treat a wide range of bacteria and are the antibiotics most likely to contribute to the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, have declined five percent in Alabama. These fill rates vary among cities from a one percent increase in Auburn/Opelika to a 27 percent decline in Anniston.

Pediatricians in Alabama have led the way in curtailing antibiotics use, with prescriptions filled for children dropping 14 percent since 2010. These declines vary from a 28 percent decrease in Gadsden to a six percent reduction in Decatur and Dothan.

Percent Change in Antibiotic Prescriptions Filled In Select Alabama Cities			
City	Percent Change in Antibiotic Prescriptions Filled 2010 to 2016	Percent Change in Broad-Spectrum Antibiotic Prescriptions Filled 2010 – 2016	Percent Change in Pediatric Antibiotic Prescriptions filled 2010 to 2016
Anniston	-22%	-27%	-26%
Auburn-Opelika	-1%	1%	-10%
Birmingham	-8%	-7%	-15%
Decatur	-11%	-6%	-6%
Dothan	-14%	-4%	-6%
Florence	-1%	0%	-14%
Gadsden	-16%	-12%	-28%
Huntsville	-10%	-13%	-15%
Mobile	-8%	-5%	-12%

Montgomery	-4%	-3%	-14%
Tuscaloosa	-5%	-4%	-18%

NATIONWIDE:

Findings from the national BCBSA report, “[Antibiotic Prescription Fill Rates Declining in the U.S.](#),” show that efforts to increase awareness of excessive antibiotic use and of the threat posed by antibiotic-resistant bacteria may be achieving measurable results:

- Antibiotic prescription fill rates have declined nine percent nationally among BCBS commercially insured members from 2010 through 2016.
- The steepest decline (13 percent) has been in broad-spectrum antibiotics.
- Pediatricians continue to lead the way in reducing antibiotics usage, with prescriptions filled for children dropping 16 percent compared to just 6 percent for adults. Broad-spectrum antibiotic prescription fill rates for newborns and infants (up to one year old) have declined 22 percent.
- Wide regional variations in antibiotic prescription fill rates exist, with the highest prescribing states in Appalachia and the South (e.g., Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana and Mississippi), filling nearly three times as many prescriptions per person as the lowest prescribing states. In addition, prescription fill rates in rural areas are 16 percent higher than in urban areas.
- In 21 percent of all treatment cases, physicians continue to prescribe antibiotics for conditions where their use is not likely to be effective. These findings indicate further improvements need to be made.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is working to reinforce appropriate use of antibiotics through several programs. “Since 2009, we have collaborated with our provider partners to develop value-based payment opportunities for physicians with the goal of enhancing overall patient care,” said Darrel Weaver, M.D., Vice President, Healthcare Network Services, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama. “Several of our physician measurement and value-based incentive programs have included a focus on appropriate antibiotic usage, most specifically for bronchitis, sore throat and upper respiratory infections.”

About the Health of America Report Series

This is the fifteenth study of the Blue Cross Blue Shield: The Health of America Report series, produced through a collaboration between BCBSA and Blue Health Intelligence, which uses a market-leading claims database to uncover key trends and insights into healthcare affordability and access to care.

For more information, visit www.bcbs.com/healthofamerica.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama has insured Alabamians for 81 years. Blue Cross offers coverage plans to corporations, individuals and the senior market. For more information about Blue Cross, visit AlabamaBlue.com. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), check out our videos on [YouTube](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) for more up-to-date information.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association is a national federation of 36 independent, community-based and locally-operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide healthcare coverage for one in three Americans. BCBSA provides healthcare insights through [The Health of America Report](#) series and the national [BCBS Health Indexsm](#). For more information on BCBSA and its member companies, please visit [BCBS.com](#). We also encourage you to connect with us on [Facebook](#), check out our videos on [YouTube](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and check out our [blog](#).

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