



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fight Misuse and Make Antibiotics Matter

Get Smart About Antibiotics Week – November 14-20, 2016

SPRINGFIELD – During *Get Smart About Antibiotics Week*, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is asking Illinoisans to learn how they can help prevent the misuse of life saving medications.

“Antibiotics are among the most commonly prescribed drugs. However, up to 50 percent of all antibiotics prescribed are not needed or are not as effective as intended,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Because of misuse, antibiotic resistant bacterial infections are more common, resulting in many of our life saving medications losing efficacy. I encourage everyone to take some time this week to learn how you can keep antibiotics working.”

Antibiotics are medicines that treat bacterial infections. They do not cure infections caused by viruses, such as the common cold or flu. Taking antibiotics when you do **not** need them can prevent them from working when you **do** need them.

Antibiotic resistance happens when bacteria change and become resistant to the antibiotics used to treat the infections they cause. Antibiotic resistant infections can take longer to treat, may require more frequent doctor visits, possible hospital stays, more severe side effects, and expensive treatments.

Each year in the United States, at least two million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections. Many more people die from other conditions that were complicated by an antibiotic resistant infection.

The following are ways you can help prevent antibiotic resistance.

- Ask your health care provider if there are other steps you can take to feel better without using an antibiotic. Sometimes the best treatment may be relieving your symptoms.
- Do not ask for antibiotics when your health care provider thinks you do not need them. Antibiotics have side effects and may do more harm than good.

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- Take the antibiotic exactly as your health care provider prescribes. Antibiotics can cause harm if taken improperly.
- Only take antibiotics prescribed for you; do not share or use leftover antibiotics.
- Never save antibiotics for the next time you become sick.
- Do not stop taking the course of antibiotics as soon as you start to feel better. Taking the full course at the full dose, even if you start to feel better earlier, should kill all of the bacteria and not leave any to mutate and become resistant.
- Ask your health care provider about recommended vaccines. Vaccines can prevent infections that may require an antibiotic and help keep diseases from spreading.

Preserving the power of antibiotics, through careful use, is critical to improving patient care and ensuring that common infections continue to be successfully treated. IDPH has released the [Illinois Action Plan to Prevent Health Care Association Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance](#), which outlines four strategic priorities: infection prevention, treatment and assessment of infections, expanding antibiotic programs to all health care settings, and targeting prevention efforts for superbugs.

IDPH urges health care facilities to make a commitment to using antibiotics appropriately, monitoring antibiotic prescribing and implementing practices to improve it, and educating clinicians and patients. Learn more through the IDPH [Precious Drugs & Scary Bugs](#) campaign.

Test your knowledge about antibiotic resistance at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2015/world-antibiotic-awareness-week/quiz/en/>.

Join the antibiotic conversation and participate in the global Twitter chat on Friday, November 18 from 10 am – 12 pm CST by using #AntibioticResistance. Follow @CDC.gov.

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