

# ANTIBIOTIC AWARENESS

## FACTS FOR CONSUMERS

### What's the Buzz with Antibiotics?

Antibiotics have saved lives but now we are using them when we don't need them. If we keep using them for the wrong reasons (such as coughs and sore throats) eventually they won't work anymore or when we really need them.

Antibiotic stewardship is an effort for every community to work together to reduce antibiotic resistance, which is a serious national and global health problem. Although antibiotics save lives, they are often improperly used in both humans and animals, causing bacteria to change in a way that they become "superbugs" and resistant to antibiotics. For persons that get sick with a "superbug," there are limited antibiotics and, in some instances, no antibiotics that will work.

### What Can Everyone Do To Help?

Try to avoid infections in the first place. If you do get an infection, use antibiotics correctly

#### DO:

- ✓ Wash hands often with plain soap and water (antibacterial soap is not necessary)
- ✓ Make sure medical staff have washed hands well before any procedure
- ✓ Stay up to date with vaccines
- ✓ Talk to your doctor to make sure you only use antibiotics for the right reasons and for the right amount of time
- ✓ Take antibiotics as prescribed
- ✓ Choose antibiotic-free meats when possible
- ✓ Rest and get plenty of fluids when you have a common cold or sore throat

#### DO NOT:

- ✗ Expect an antibiotic for a common cold, flu, or acute bronchitis
- ✗ Give your antibiotics to someone else, or take antibiotics that were not ordered for you
- ✗ Save unused antibiotics to take later

Each year

**47**

**MILLION**

antibiotic  
prescriptions  
are

**unnecessary**

Each year more  
than



**MILLION**

are infected with  
antibiotic-resistant  
bacteria

**35,000**  
**DIE**

**from those**  
**infections**

## 5 Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Make sure you're taking antibiotics for the right reasons by asking these five questions:

### 1. Do I really need antibiotics?

- Antibiotics fight bacterial infections, like strep throat but they don't fight viruses like common colds, flu, or most sore throats and sinus infections.

### 2. What are the risks?

- Antibiotics have side effects such as vomiting, diarrhea, and allergic reactions. They can also lead to antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics can also lead to *C. diff* infection, which causes diarrhea and can lead to severe colon damage and death. *C. diff* is estimated to cause almost half a million infections in the U.S. each year.

### 3. Are there simpler, safer options?

- You may just need to rest and drink plenty of fluids.

### 4. How much do they cost?

- Antibiotics may cost you a lot of time and money if it isn't necessary or if you have side effects from them.

### 5. How do I safely take antibiotics?

- If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, take them exactly as directed.

## Resources For Patients And Families

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) leads national efforts to help fight antibiotic resistance and improve antibiotic use. Learn more about antibiotic stewardship on the CDC website here: <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/materials-references/index.html> or access the

**Be Antibiotics Aware, C. diff Infection - Am I At Risk** [www.cdc.gov/cdiff/pdf/fs-cdiff-patientsfamilies-508.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/cdiff/pdf/fs-cdiff-patientsfamilies-508.pdf) and

**What's Got You Sick? Viruses or Bacteria?** [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/pdfs/VirusOrBacteria-Original-P.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/pdfs/VirusOrBacteria-Original-P.pdf)

**Choosing Wisely** is a program to help doctors and patients discuss the best options for their care. They have developed resources to help patients understand when antibiotic use may or may not be needed. Visit their website for more information:

[www.choosingwisely.org/patient-resources](http://www.choosingwisely.org/patient-resources).