

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

Get Smart About Antibiotics Week (Get Smart Week) is a national, annual observance to raise awareness about antibiotic resistance and the importance of antibiotic stewardship. It corresponds with antibiotic awareness activities throughout the world including the European Union's Antibiotic Awareness Day and the World Health Organization's World Antibiotic Awareness Week. In 2015, Governor Tom Wolf issued a Get Smart Week Proclamation encouraging statewide regarding judicious use of antibiotics in human medicine and food animal production. Physician General Rachel Levine will announce winners of this year's Kids' Art Competition on Nov. 18 in Pittsburgh at one of the Get Smart Week observance events. In addition to the event in Pittsburgh, there will be events at Penn State University, Hershey Medical Center and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. For information regarding activities in Pennsylvania, visit www.knowwhentosayno.org or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/getsmart.

Why do we celebrate Get Smart Week?

Antibiotic resistance is when bacteria stop responding to the drugs made to kill them. It is possibly the single most important infectious disease threat we face today. We risk turning back the clock to a world where simple infections could kill people as they did a century ago.

Each year, more than 2 million people in the United States get infections from germs that are resistant to antibiotics— and at least 23,000 people die as a result.

What can we do to slow the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria?

The most important action to slow the development and spread of antibiotic-resistant infections is for us to improve the way antibiotics are prescribed and used. If we don't take better care of the antibiotics we have today, we may lose these antibiotics and the next ones that come along. If we lose antibiotics, we also weaken our ability to provide organ transplants, save victims of burns and trauma, and treat patients with sepsis and cancer. Antibiotics and everything they support could become impossible. Antibiotic stewardship programs and interventions help make sure that patients receive antibiotics only when absolutely necessary and that, when they are needed, the correct antibiotic is prescribed in a timely manner at the right dose and time.



Ways that you can help!

Keep up with vaccinations: Vaccinations help prevent infections that may require antibiotics and help prevent diseases from spreading.

Handwashing: Washing your hands is one of the best ways to keep yourself and your family healthy by stopping the spread of germs that cause infections.

Ask about symptom relief: Never pressure your doctor for antibiotics; instead, ask for the best treatment for your illness. Talk to your doctor about how to relieve symptoms so that you can feel better.



Only take antibiotics for infections caused by bacteria: Illnesses caused by viruses, like the common cold and the flu, do not improve with antibiotics. Using antibiotics when they are not needed can cause harmful side effects and make antibiotics

less powerful against certain bacteria.

Ask if watchful waiting is right for you: Even some bacterial infections, like mild sinus and ear infections, can get better without antibiotics. For some illnesses, your doctor may recommend watchful waiting, meaning waiting a few days to see if you get better before deciding to prescribe antibiotics.

Ask about side effects: Talk to your doctor about potential side effects of antibiotics.

Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed: Even if you feel better, do not skip doses or stop taking an antibiotic early without approval from your doctor.

Throw leftover antibiotics away: Never save antibiotics for future illnesses, take antibiotics prescribed for others, or share antibiotics with others. Talk to your pharmacist about how to dispose of leftover antibiotics.

Source: CDC

Questions to ask your child's doctor

1. What is the best treatment for my child's illness?

Antibiotics aren't needed for common illnesses, such as colds, most sore throats, the flu and even some ear infections. These illnesses are often caused by viruses, which do not respond to antibiotics. Sometimes the best treatment is symptom relief.

2. Is this the right antibiotic for the type of infection?

If an antibiotic will help your child, it is important to use an antibiotic that is made to fight the bacteria causing your child's illness. If the doctor says your child needs an antibiotic, ask if it is the one most "targeted" to treat the infection while causing the least side effects.

3. What can I do to help my child feel better?

Pain relievers, fever reducers, saline nasal spray or drops, warm compresses, liquids, and rest may be the best thing to help your child feel better. Ask your child's doctor how best to relieve symptoms.

*Content adapted from CDC "Get Smart About Antibiotics Week Toolkit"

If you have any ideas for future newsletters or would like more information, please feel free to contact us.
To unsubscribe, please email the Get Smart Team: Knowwhentosayno@pa.gov.