



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department Urges Clinicians and Patients to “Get Smart” About Antibiotics



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BURLINGTON - Overuse of antibiotics has created an increasingly dangerous public health threat, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Vermont Department of Health during "Get Smart About Antibiotics" Week (Nov. 18-24) is working to address the threat by educating and advising clinicians and patients statewide.

Vermont healthcare providers are being asked to understand and practice antibiotic stewardship, where antibiotics are prescribed only when indicated and, when they are prescribed, the right drug, dose and duration are used.

Antibiotics cure bacterial infections. They do not work on viral infections such as colds and flu. Most sore throats and bronchitis are caused by viruses too, so antibiotics will not help people get better. Patients are being asked to do their part and not request antibiotics when they have a viral infection.



“The belief that an antibiotic will be helpful or shorten time away from work, or the time a child should be kept out of school, or child care, is misguided,” said Patsy Kelso, state epidemiologist for infectious disease. “It’s a perception we are working hard to change.”

Each year, millions of prescriptions for antibiotics are filled to fight infections. But overuse and misuse of antibiotics can change germs, allowing them to develop resistance to antibiotics, which increases the risk of an infection with limited or no treatment options, according to the CDC.

“Antibiotics are powerful tools that enhance a providers’ ability to treat a patient, but these essential drugs have to be used properly and judiciously if we want them to continue to be effective for many years to come,” Kelso said.

When you are prescribed an antibiotic:

Take it exactly as the doctor tells you. Complete the prescribed course even if you are feeling better. If treatment stops too soon, some bacteria may survive and re-infect you. This applies to children, too. Make sure your children take all medication as prescribed, even if they feel better.

For more information about “Get Smart About Antibiotics” visit:

<http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/antibiotics/getsmart.aspx>

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