VERMONT Department of Health
Agency of Human Services

Health Department and Insurers Team Up to Help Vermonters *Get Smart About Antibiotics*

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Burlington, VT – The Vermont Department of Health has partnered with three health insurance companies – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, Cigna and MVP Health Care – to promote the *Get Smart About Antibiotics* campaign aimed at educating Vermonters about appropriate antibiotic use, and raising awareness about antibiotic resistance.

“Germs that cause colds and flu thrive in winter, resulting in symptoms that make people feel miserable,” said Patsy Kelso, state epidemiologist for infectious disease. “Antibiotics treat bacterial infections, but they won’t touch an infection caused by a virus, which is the likely culprit for most stuffy noses, sore throats and coughs.”

When antibiotics are given to treat viral infections, two things happen: they don’t help the sick person to recover, and they boost medication-resistant bacteria, making some infections untreatable.

Antibiotic resistance is a shared problem that requires a shared solution. To prevent antibiotic resistance, the Health Department and Vermont health insurers ask that:

- Patients take a full course of antibiotics as instructed by their doctor.
- Parents don’t pressure physicians into prescribing antibiotics when they are not indicated for children.
- Physicians embrace antibiotic stewardship and educate patients on the appropriate use of antibiotics.
- Pharmacists monitor prescribing patterns and counsel patients on appropriate use.
- Health care facilities make antibiotic stewardship a priority.

Prevention is the best approach during cold and flu season. Hand washing, vaccinations and infection control are effective methods for preventing infection.

For more information on the Get Smart about Antibiotics campaign: **www.cdc.gov/getsmart/index.html**.

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