



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department: Antibiotics Don't Work for Colds and the Flu

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BURLINGTON – Many Vermonters diagnosed with an illness caused by a virus during this cold and flu season may push their healthcare provider to prescribe an antibiotic, hoping to speed recovery and lessen symptoms.

But antibiotics don't work for viruses. Antibiotics are an important tool to treat diseases caused by bacteria such as strep throat. Inappropriate use of antibiotics can contribute to the development of drug-resistant organisms such as **MRSA** (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infection).

The Vermont Department of Health, hospitals and healthcare providers statewide are asking everyone to "**Get Smart About Antibiotics**" as part of national public health campaign to call attention to this growing problem.

"Vermont healthcare providers do a good job of not over-prescribing antibiotics, but everyone can do their part by not expecting a prescription for antibiotics when they are ill," said Patsy Kelso, state epidemiologist. "If you are diagnosed with an illness caused by a virus, get plenty of rest and fluids and let your body's natural defenses fight the virus."

The Health Department recommends everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot as the best way to protect yourself and those around you from the flu.

The Health Department is also leading an effort to prevent the spread of multidrug-resistant organisms in healthcare facilities statewide. An MDRO (multidrug-resistant organism) Prevention Collaborative was established in September 2010, with funding provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as part of a national priority to prevent and control healthcare-associated infections.

The Vermont collaborative includes the Health Department, the Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, all of Vermont's hospitals, the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, and most of the state's long-term care facilities that provide skilled nursing services. The appropriate use of antibiotics is one area of focus of the collaborative.

For more information about the "Get Smart About Antibiotics" campaign, or to find an adult flu shot clinic in your area visit: healthvermont.gov.

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