



Antibiotics – you don’t always need them

November 14 2017 12:06 PM

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is recognizing U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week, November 13-19, 2017, to help decrease the misuse of antibiotics and protect people from the dangers of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Antibiotics do NOT cure viral infections such as colds, flu, most sore throats, most coughs and bronchitis, many sinus infections, and many ear infections.

“Antibiotics are crucial in treating many diseases. However, when antibiotics are used incorrectly or unnecessarily, which happens more than 50 percent of the time according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), bacteria become resistant to antibiotics,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “As bacteria become more resistant to antibiotics, those bacterial illnesses will be more difficult to treat or untreatable.”

According to the CDC, each year in the United States at least 2 million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics, and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections.

Since 2012, IDPH has maintained antibiotic stewardship initiatives engaging health care facilities across the state. This November, Illinois’ program is expanding its focus to dentists, who comprise the fourth-highest antibiotic prescribing group in the United States. In addition to distributing antibiotic prescribing guidelines and patient education materials, IDPH will conduct a survey of Illinois dentists to learn what they are doing to improve their antibiotic prescribing practices and what challenges they face in doing so.

How you can help prevent antibiotic resistance:

- Do not ask for antibiotics when your health care provider thinks you do not need them. Antibiotics don’t cure all diseases. They also have side effects, and may do more harm than good.
- Do not share or use leftover antibiotics; only take antibiotics prescribed for you.
- Do not save antibiotics for future illnesses. Talk to your pharmacist about safely

discarding leftover medicines.

- Do ask your health care provider if there are other steps you can take to feel better without using an antibiotic. Sometimes the best treatment may be relieving your symptoms.
- Do take antibiotics exactly as your health care provider prescribes. Do not skip doses or stop taking the course of antibiotics prescribed to you, even if you start to feel better.
- Do stay up to date on your recommended vaccines. Vaccines help prevent infections and keep diseases from spreading.
- Do wash your hands regularly. Cleaning your hands helps stop the spread of disease and protect yourself from illness.

It can be difficult to tell the difference between a common cold and a bacterial infection. Check with a health care professional if:

- Symptoms last more than 10 days without improvement
- Symptoms are severe or unusual
- A child younger than three months has a fever

Join the antibiotic resistance conversation all week by following @CDCgov and @IPDH for more updates and to #BeAntibioticsAware