

# Health Awareness

## It's Flu Season: CDC Reminds Public That Antibiotics Do Not Treat Flu

(NAPSA)—Flu season is upon us and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) wants patients and families to remember that prescription antiviral drugs, not antibiotics, are the treatment for influenza (flu). Antibiotics do not treat viruses that cause colds and the flu. They are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria.

Remember that the best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu is by getting your annual flu vaccine. It's not too late to get vaccinated.

### KNOW WHAT'S GOT YOU SICK

Viruses cause infections like the common cold, flu, runny noses and most sore throats, and *none* of these are treated with antibiotics. Illnesses like strep throat, pneumonia and whooping cough are examples of illnesses caused by bacteria that *can* be treated with antibiotics.

### ANTIBIOTICS AREN'T ALWAYS THE ANSWER

If you have the flu, taking antibiotics won't help to treat your flu illness. It is important to remember that any time you take antibiotics it can lead to antibiotic resistance and cause side effects.

Antibiotic resistance is one of the most urgent threats to the public's health and occurs when bacteria become resis-



**Children and adults 65 years and older are most susceptible to the flu, but vaccinations can protect you and your family.**

1) Get vaccinated. Everyone 6 months or older should get a yearly flu vaccine.

2) Stop the spread of germs by avoiding close contact with sick people. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Clean your hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.

3) If you get sick, take antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.

### FIND OUT HOW TO FEEL BETTER

Most healthy people with the flu have mild illness and recover in less than two weeks without needing medical care or

## What's got you sick?

Common Condition	Common Cause			Are Antibiotics Needed?
	Bacteria	Bacteria or Virus	Virus	
Strep throat	✓			Yes
Whooping cough	✓			Yes
Urinary tract infection	✓			Yes
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)*		✓		No*
Common cold/runny nose			✓	No
Sore throat (except strep)			✓	No
Flu			✓	No

\* Studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help you feel better.

tant to the antibiotics designed to kill them. Antibiotic side effects range from minor—e.g., rash, dizziness, nausea, yeast infections—to very severe health problems, e.g., life-threatening allergic reactions or *Clostridium difficile* infection (also called *C. difficile* or *C. diff*), which causes diarrhea that can lead to severe colon damage or death.

When a patient needs antibiotics, the benefits outweigh the risks of side effects. Antibiotics save lives and are critical tools for treating a number of common infections like pneumonia and life-threatening conditions like sepsis.

### PROTECT YOURSELF FROM INFLUENZA (FLU)

You can protect yourself and others from the flu in three steps.

antiviral drugs. If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.

If, however, you have flu symptoms and are at high risk of having complications from flu, or are very sick or worried about your illness, contact your healthcare professional. Your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs to treat your illness. People at high risk of having complications from flu include young children, people 65 years of age and older, pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions.

Visit [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use) for information on antibiotic prescribing and use, and visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) for information about the flu.