

## Taking ANTIBIOTICS when you don't need them puts you and your family at risk

Keep Antibiotics Working



Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections such as meningitis, tuberculosis and pneumonia. They do not work on viruses, so antibiotics cannot treat infections such as colds and flu. Bacteria are continually adapting to develop new ways of withstanding antibiotic treatment. This is called antibiotic resistance and is one of the biggest threats facing us today.

Antibiotic resistance can then spread between different bacteria in our bodies. Antibiotic resistant bacteria can be carried by healthy or ill people and can spread to others. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics is a major factor that causes antibiotic resistance. The more often a person takes antibiotics, the more likely they are to develop antibiotic resistant bacteria in the body. To reduce this risk, it is important that antibiotics are taken only when necessary and that patients follow advice given by the doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

There are simple actions you can take to help keep antibiotics working:

- Don't ask for antibiotics if you have a cough or cold. Antibiotics should only be taken for bacterial infections. Many infections get better on their own, without the need for antibiotics. Go to your pharmacist for advice first and they may be able to help with your symptoms.
- If the doctor does prescribe you with antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed; never save them for later and never share them with others.
- Spread the word. Tell your friends and family about antibiotic resistance.

You can also help prevent infections spreading by:

- Using tissues and disposing of them when you sneeze.
- Washing hands thoroughly with soap, especially after you have used a tissue or sneezed into your hand.
- Get the flu vaccine if you or your child are eligible.



*You can find out more and choose a pledge about how you can protect yourself, your family and friends against the spread of antibiotic resistance on the Antibiotic Guardian website (<http://antibioticguardian.com/>).*



*There are several fun educational activities linked to the national curricula to educate children on microbes, infections and antibiotics on the e-Bug website ([www.e-bug.eu](http://www.e-bug.eu)).*