



Illinois Marks U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week, November 18-24

Agency urges consumers and healthcare professionals to help improve antibiotic use to combat the threat of antimicrobial resistance

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) will mark U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week, November 18-24, with public and social media outreach to encourage best practices in the use of antibiotics. The campaign is aimed at raising awareness of the threat of antimicrobial resistance and the importance of appropriate antibiotic use.

“Antibiotics are an essential tool to fight infections. However, when not used effectively, antibiotic use can have unintended consequences that place patients at risk for serious drug-resistant illness,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “This week is a good time to remind everyone to only use antibiotics when necessary and to carefully follow instructions for their use when prescribed.”

Vohra notes that antibiotics do not treat viruses, such as those that cause colds, the flu, RSV, or COVID-19. Use of antibiotics when not medically recommended can increase the likelihood of antimicrobial resistance, when bacteria and other germs develop an immunity to the drugs that were designed to fight them. Each year, more than 2.8 million antimicrobial-resistant infections occur in the United States, and more than 35,000 people die as a result.

To further promote public awareness, Governor JB Pritzker has issued a proclamation and recorded a video message about Antibiotic Awareness Week. In the video, the governor notes the number of antibiotic-resistant infections annually and says, “This is why the Illinois Department of Public Health and its many partners throughout the state are working together to educate health professionals and the general public about antimicrobial resistance and appropriate antibiotic use. I am proud to support them by declaring the week of November 18 to 24 Antibiotic Awareness Week in Illinois.” You can [view the video here](#).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages healthcare professionals to prescribe antibiotics judiciously and to speak with their patients about why they don’t need antibiotics for a viral respiratory infection, what to do to feel better, and when to seek additional care. The CDC has created an easy reference chart to explain when antibiotic use is not appropriate for common respiratory infections:

Common Respiratory Infections	Common Causes	Are Antibiotics Needed?
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	Virus	Virus or Bacteria	Bacteria	
Common cold/runny nose	✓			No
Sore throat (except strep)	✓			No
COVID-19	✓			No
Flu	✓			No
Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults) (studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help patients feel better)		✓		No (studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help patients feel better)
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Strep throat			✓	Yes
Whooping cough			✓	Yes

U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week also encourages everyone to use proper hygiene as another means of reducing infections and preventing antimicrobial resistance. These strategies include regular hand-washing with soap and water (or using a hand sanitizer that’s at least 60% alcohol); covering coughs and sneezes; staying home when sick; and getting recommended vaccines, including flu and COVID shots.

CDC notes that “prevention is the most foundational and successful tool we have to protect people from antimicrobial-resistant infections and their spread.” Nationwide investments in infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship efforts drove down deaths from antimicrobial-resistant infections by 18% from 2012 through 2017. However, the CDC [2022 Special Report on COVID-19: U.S. Impact On Antimicrobial Resistance](#) noted significant surges in antimicrobial-resistant infections and antibiotic use in hospitals during the first year of the pandemic, emphasizing the need to strengthen our commitment to prevention and antimicrobial stewardship.

IDPH is committed to continued collaboration with partners to implement the 2024-2029 Illinois Action Plan to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance, which aims to improve antibiotic prescribing practices across all health care settings and raise public awareness about appropriate antibiotic use. IDPH will also continue to support antimicrobial stewardship by offering resources and technical assistance to health care facilities and prescribers, including a series of regional workshops, webinars, toolkits, and collaborative

efforts. Health care professionals can learn more about those efforts by visiting the [IDPH Antimicrobial Stewardship](#) resource page.