

Physicians advise patients to get smart about antibiotics

November 16 2012, by Cindy Young

It's cold and flu season. But taking antibiotics for cold and flu viruses won't make children and adults feel better or help them get back to school or work faster.

The week of Nov. 12–18 is Get Smart About Antibiotics Week, an annual national campaign coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to the CDC, it is estimated that more than 50 percent of antibiotics are unnecessarily prescribed for [upper respiratory infections](#) like cough and cold illnesses, which are mostly caused by viruses. Antibiotic overuse increases the development of drug-resistant germs. The resulting antibiotic resistance has become one of the most pressing public health threats.

Locally, Wright State Physicians is encouraging patients to understand that antibiotics kill bacteria, not cold and [flu viruses](#). "Patients expect antibiotics to work for every illness," said Glen Solomon, M.D., chair and professor in the Department of Internal Medicine and Internal Medicine Residency Program director at the Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine and Wright State Physicians. "Antibiotics are powerful tools for fighting illness, but [overuse of antibiotics](#) has helped create new strains of infectious diseases."

Solomon encourages those who are ill to ask their [health care providers](#) what's best. Colds caused by viruses may last for two weeks or longer. Cold and flu sufferers can increase their fluid intake, use a cool mist vaporizer or saline nasal spray to relieve congestion and soothe sore

throats with ice chips, sore throat spray or lozenges (for older children and adults).

However, viral infections sometimes lead to bacterial infections.

"Patients should contact their doctor if their illness get worse or lasts a long time," Solomon said. "Antibiotics are strong medicines. Let's keep them that way."

Provided by Wright State University

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