

Antibiotic shortage is a problem, but not because of the flu

January 3 2023, by Craig Martin



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Throughout the past few weeks we have seen several headlines about the impact of the antibiotic shortage on flu and RSV treatments. Stories like these bring light to an important topic facing our medical community: the shortage of commonly used antibiotics, especially those used in children. Drug shortages have plagued certain sectors of health care for years, and this one is particularly worrisome.

However, while these antibiotics are important for conditions like [strep throat](#) and [ear infections](#), they do not work for the flu or COVID-19. Those infections are caused by viruses, which do not respond to antibiotics. Stories have stated that the antibiotic shortage makes flu difficult to treat, which is inaccurate. Flu can be treated with a medication specifically targeted to the flu virus, not antibiotics like amoxicillin. The same goes for COVID-19. It's important to get this right, as the overuse of antibiotics creates significant problems.

As public health advocates, one of the most significant hurdles we face is the overuse of antibiotics in the community. The common misperception that antibiotics are effective for [viral infections](#) leads to them being used more than they should be. Each time an antibiotic is prescribed for someone who doesn't need it, bacteria become more and more resistant to it, and we come one step closer to no longer having effective antibiotics for patients who truly need them. We are already seeing this happen in our sickest patients, and we need everyone's help to turn the ship around.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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