

Be Smart About Antibiotics

Brought to you by the WNY healthcare community

2002-2003

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WNY Health Care Community Launches Campaign To Be Smart About Antibiotics

Virtually all important bacterial infections are becoming resistant to treatment with antibiotics, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Widespread use of antibiotics promotes resistance that can result in significant danger and suffering for children and adults who have common infections.

Partners in the Western New York health care community, including Catholic Health System, BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York, Independent Health, Kaleida Health and Univera Healthcare, will launch the 2002-2003 *Be Smart About Antibiotics* campaign, a multifaceted effort to raise awareness and initiate action to address the inappropriate use of antibiotics.

The campaign was launched at a news conference in the Kaleida/Children's Hospital School-Based Health Center at Kensington High School on Wednesday, October 30 at 10:15 a.m.

"With cold and flu season upon us, it is now more important than ever to be smart about antibiotics," said Matthew Antalek, DO, Chair, WNY Advisory Board for Be Smart About Antibiotics. "Antibiotics are among the most commonly prescribed medications today. Over-prescribing or misusing antibiotics is a real concern because it's proven to cause bacterial strains to become resistant to treatment."

The CDC ranks antibiotic resistance as one of the world's most pressing public health problems. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can jeopardize the usefulness of essential drugs that once effectively treated many common infections. Reducing or eliminating the effectiveness of antibiotics will increase the health risks of millions suffering from bacterial infections.

This collaborative effort, which involves all facets of the WNY health care community, this year will welcome activities supported through the Pharmacists Association of Western New York and the School Nurses Association of Western New York. The *Be Smart About Antibiotics* campaign will include the following:

- Mailing to physicians in WNY with information and educational materials for their patients

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- A news media campaign designed to reach out to the general public with important messages about the appropriate use of antibiotics
- Local pharmacists collaborating with school nurses to deliver important messages about the appropriate use of antibiotics to school children and their parents
- Countertop displays with educational materials at retail pharmacy locations throughout WNY
- Each campaign partner targeting all members, patients, employees and physicians with key messages and materials about the appropriate use of antibiotics

Be Smart About Antibiotics will target physicians, other health care providers, pharmacists and the general public with the following key messages:

- **Over-prescribing and/or misuse of antibiotics are a real concern because it's proven to cause bacterial strains to become resistant to treatment.**

For example, according to the CDC, up to 30 percent of the bacteria that cause respiratory infections (Streptococcus pneumonia) are no longer susceptible to penicillin and resistance to multiple forms of antibiotics is common.

- **Antibiotics are an effective treatment for bacterial infections, but not for viral infections.**

Bacterial infections include pneumonia and other respiratory infections.

Viral Infections include the common cold, coughs, many sore throats and flu.

- **It is vitally important to follow your doctor's advice and treatment plans - Cold and flu season is here.** Your doctor will decide the best treatment for your condition. Be sure to follow your doctor's advice and ask questions if anything is unclear.

Do not save some of your antibiotic for the next time you get sick and do not take an antibiotic that is prescribed for someone else.

- **All health care professionals should educate their patients about appropriate use of antibiotics –**

Patient demand for antibiotics will increase as the overall demand for prescription drugs increases each year. It is vitally important that physicians prescribe antibiotics only when necessary and that all health care professionals educate patients about the appropriate and inappropriate use of antibiotics.

For more information about *Be Smart About Antibiotics*, access the Web site of any of the Be Smart About Antibiotics campaign partners.

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