

Drug-resistant infections: the facts.

- 1. Antibiotics are not effective against coughs, colds, flu and most sore throats. Most coughs, colds and most sore throats and flu are caused by viruses, which antibiotics do not work against.** Antibiotics cannot help you recover from infections caused by viruses, such as common colds, and most coughs and sore throats, because antibiotics are only effective against bacterial infections. Mild infections with bacteria may also get better without antibiotics. Remember to wash your hands; this is the single best way to prevent the spread of respiratory tract infections.
- 2. When I have a cough, cold or sore throat, I should... check with a pharmacist first about how to treat my symptoms.** A pharmacist is an expert on medicines, and can help you treat your symptoms and pain with over the counter treatments. However, if you have severe symptoms and warning signs such as difficulty breathing or sharp chest pain for serious illness you should seek immediate medical attention; you can learn more at treatyourselfbetter.co.uk.
- 3. There are lots of colds going around. I've been told taking antibiotics 'just in case' can drive up the number of drug-resistant infections, but... taking antibiotics when you don't need to will allow bacteria to develop a resistance to the antibiotic.** Bacteria adapt and find way to survive the effects antibiotics. These drug-resistant bacteria may also be called 'antibiotic resistant'; antibiotics no longer kill these germs. The more you use an antibiotic, the more the bacteria become resistant to it.

When you take antibiotics, it can also kill the good bacteria which lives in and protects your body, making you more susceptible to infection from other harmful and potentially drug-resistant bacteria and like most medicines, taking antibiotics can have side effects. Drug-resistant infections are difficult to treat and can affect anyone; they are a particular threat to older people and those with weakened immune systems.

- 4. My GP has only given me a short prescription of antibiotics but I think I need them for longer. I should... take the antibiotics as prescribed – or they may not clear the infection.** When antibiotics are prescribed by a health professional it is important that you always take it as directed. Antibiotics are given at a specific dose over a period of time to be optimal to clear an infection, changing the dose may reduce the effectiveness of the antibiotics and enable bacteria to develop drug-resistance. Never share your antibiotics with anyone else – they are for you only and may not be effective for different infections in another individual.
- 5. Drug-resistant infections, also known as antibiotic resistant infections are serious because...**
 - antibiotics may not work against resistant bacteria
 - without effective antibiotics many routine treatments or operations like chemotherapy, surgery and Caesarean sections will become increasingly dangerous or impossible
 - overuse of antibiotics means that antibiotic resistance will spread faster and faster
 - drug-resistant infections affect both humans and animals

All of the above: the spread of drug-resistant infections is one of the biggest threats facing us today; routine treatments and operations rely on antibiotics to work! We all need to act now to stop the spread of antibiotic resistance, or else we may not have them for much longer.

To help do your part to stop the spread of antibiotic resistance, choose a pledge at AntibioticGuardian.com. Your actions can help protect

