



Get Smart About Antibiotics Week is a national annual observance to **raise awareness of antibiotic resistance** and the **importance of appropriate antibiotic use**.

While antibiotics are **life-saving drugs** that treat bacterial infections, they are not without risks.

Each year in the United States, at least **2 million people** become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics and at least **23,000 people** die as a direct result of these infections.

Antibiotics are the most common cause of emergency department visits for **adverse drug events** in children under 18 years of age.

This is why it is so important to use antibiotics only when needed, and if needed, to use the **right drug at the right dose and for the right amount of time**.

### Here are a few ways you can become a part of Get Smart Week 2016:

- Join our first Get Smart Week Thunderclap using #AntibioticSmart. Participate from your Facebook and Twitter Profiles on Monday, November 14. Sign up here: <http://thndr.me/B6puNT>
- Participate in our annual Get Smart Week Twitter Chat on Friday, November 18 from 11am–1pm. Join the conversation using #AntibioticResistance.
- Test your knowledge of antibiotics with our interactive Antibiotic Quiz at [cdc.gov/getsmart](http://cdc.gov/getsmart).
- Find Get Smart Week materials at [cdc.gov/getsmart](http://cdc.gov/getsmart). Here you will find free fact sheets, posters, graphics, and more to help you make decisions regarding antibiotics for you and your family!

## Improving antibiotic use starts with you! Using antibiotics wisely is the best way to ensure they work for future bacterial illnesses and prevent unnecessary side effects.

Here are tips for how to use antibiotics wisely (Hint: It starts with preventing infections in the first place):

- **Keep up with vaccinations.** Vaccinations help prevent infections that may require antibiotics and helps prevent diseases from spreading.
- **Handwashing.** Washing your hands is one of the best ways to keep yourself and your family healthy by preventing the spread of germs that cause infections.
- **Ask about symptom relief.** Never pressure your healthcare professional for antibiotics, instead ask for the best treatment for your illness. Talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist about how to relieve symptoms so that you can feel better.
- **Only take antibiotics** for infections caused by bacteria. Illnesses caused by viruses, like the common cold and the flu, do not improve with antibiotics. Using antibiotics when they are not needed can cause harmful side effects and make antibiotics less powerful against certain bacteria.
- **Ask if watchful waiting is right for you.** Even some bacterial infections, like mild sinus and ear infections, can get better without antibiotics. For some illnesses, your healthcare professional may recommend watchful waiting, meaning waiting a few days to see if you get better before deciding to prescribe antibiotics.
- **Ask about side effects.** Talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist about potential side effects of antibiotics.
- **Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed.** Even if you feel better, do not skip doses or stop taking an antibiotic early without approval from your healthcare professional.
- **Throw leftover antibiotics away.** Never save antibiotics for future illnesses, take antibiotics prescribed for others, or share antibiotics with others. Talk to your pharmacist about how to dispose of leftover antibiotics.
- Visit [cdc.gov/getsmart](https://www.cdc.gov/getsmart) to learn more about using antibiotics wisely.