

## Antibiotics are Not Always the Answer



Antimicrobial resistance = antibiotics unable to fight bacteria and viruses = a growing number of infections being harder, almost impossible, to treat.

Every year, over 25 million antibiotic prescriptions are written for human consumption in Canada, 30-50% of which are estimated to be unnecessary.

**November 13 to 19, 2017 marked World Antibiotics Awareness Week.** The focus of Antibiotic Awareness Week is to raise awareness of antibiotic resistance, antibiotic overuse, and to encourage appropriate antibiotic use in all healthcare settings. The rise of antibiotic resistance is leading to untreatable infections which can affect anyone, of any age, in any country.

Self care  
is proactive  
health care.

“Antibiotics are a precious resource, so it is important to get the right advice before taking them. This not only ensures you and your family get the best treatment, responsible use of antibiotics will also help reduce the threat of antibiotic resistance.”

~ World Health Organization

[www.sunrisehealthregion.sk.ca](http://www.sunrisehealthregion.sk.ca)

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The World Health Organization (WHO) describes **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** as:

- the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics and antivirals) from working against it.
- As a result, **standard treatments become ineffective**, infections persist and may spread to others.
- **A growing list of infections** – such as tuberculosis, gonorrhea, and bacteria that cause pneumonia and urinary tract infections – are becoming harder, and sometimes impossible, to treat as **antibiotics become less effective**.
- Antibiotic resistance is **one of the biggest threats** to global health, food security and development.

One of the ways that we can help fight antibiotic resistance is to **use antibiotics more wisely**. If you are not feeling well and are headed to your health practitioner's office for advice, remember that antibiotics are not always the answer.

**Choosing Wisely Canada**, a national campaign helping clinicians and patients engage in healthy conversations about potentially unnecessary tests and treatments, has identified three questions that can make all the difference in understanding what the best answer might be for your individual situation. The goal is ultimately about good care and opening a conversation with your health care provider on what's right and needed for you.

### ANTIBIOTICS: THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

#### 1) Do I really need antibiotics?

Antibiotics fight bacterial infections, like strep throat, whooping cough and bladder infections. But they don't fight viruses – like common colds, flu, or most sore throats and sinus infections. Ask if you have a bacterial infection.

#### 2) What are the risks?

Antibiotics can cause diarrhea, vomiting, and more. They can also lead to "antibiotic resistance" – if you use antibiotics when you don't need them, they may not work when you do need them in the future.

#### 3) Are there simpler, safer options?

The best way to treat most colds, coughs or sore throats is with plenty of fluids and rest. Talk to your health care provider about the options.

Talk about what you need, and what you don't.  
To learn more, visit [www.choosingwiselycanada.org/antibiotics](http://www.choosingwiselycanada.org/antibiotics)

  
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