



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

Matthew G. Bevin
Governor

Division of Communications
275 E. Main Street, 5C-A
Frankfort, KY 40621
(502) 564-6786
Fax: (502) 564-0274
www.chfs.ky.gov

Vickie Yates Brown Glisson
Secretary

Statewide News Release

Media Contact: Doug Hogan or Beth Fisher,
(502) 564-6786, ext. 3467 or 3101

Get Smart About Antibiotics

Drugs Can Have Dangerous Consequences if Not Taken Correctly

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 17, 2016) — Antibiotics, common medications like penicillin, can be successfully used to treat a variety of illnesses caused by microorganisms that infect the body. However, – when used inappropriately these medications can have dire consequences.

“Antibiotics are the only drugs where use in one patient can impact the effectiveness in another patient,” said Andrea Flinchum, a registered nurse and coordinator for the Kentucky Department for Public Health’s Healthcare Associated Infection Prevention program. “They are wonderful tools in fighting bacterial or fungal infections – but prescribing them for viruses or taking them for illnesses they do not treat, can cause bacteria to become resistant to these drugs.”

As part of Get Smart About Antibiotics Week, a nationally recognized observance to educate the public and improve the use of antibiotics, Kentucky public health officials working within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) are emphasizing what antibiotics should be used for – and when they should be avoided. In addition, Governor Matt Bevin has officially proclaimed Get Smart About Antibiotics Week in Kentucky. Gov. Bevin’s proclamation can be viewed online [here](#).

“It is critical to use these life-saving drugs when truly necessary, while also using the right drug at the right dose and duration to protect the effectiveness of antibiotics,” said Flinchum. “We encourage clinicians to improve prescribing habits and patients to ask their providers if antibiotics are truly needed for their care.”

Antibiotic resistance – the ability of bacteria to no longer be stopped by the drugs that once controlled them – threatens to take us back to the days when infections commonly killed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year 2 million Americans get an infection with antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Every year 23,000 of those patients die.

According to Flinchum, Kentucky has the highest prescribing rate for antibiotics in the outpatient setting in the United States.

Everyone can take action to improve antibiotic prescribing and antibiotic use:



- **Clinicians can improve prescribing practices.** CDC estimates that more than half of the antibiotics given for upper respiratory infections and nearly a third of antibiotics used in hospitals are prescribed inappropriately. Antibiotics can only treat illnesses caused by bacteria. They don't treat viral illnesses like the common cold, the flu, most sore throats, bronchitis and many sinus and ear infections.
- **Patients can get smart about antibiotics.** Learn the [6 smart facts](#) about antibiotic use. CDC recommends that antibiotics be taken as prescribed. They should not be shared or saved for the next illness, and doses should not be skipped or stopped unless instructed by a clinician. Rather than pressuring your healthcare provider to prescribe antibiotics, ask what steps you can take to feel better.
- **Prevent infections by practicing good hand hygiene.** CDC and DPH recommends washing your hands under running water with soap for 15 seconds, or rubbing them with an alcohol-based hand rub and letting them dry thoroughly.
- **Protect yourself.** Get vaccinated against the flu and other vaccine-preventable infections to avoid complications or the need for antibiotics in the first place.

Get Smart About Antibiotics Week runs through Nov. 20 and is observed each year around the country. You can learn more about the effort [here](#).

-30-

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.