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CONTACT:

James.Leach@illinois.gov

IDPH Marks U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week, November 18-24

Nearly 90 Illinois hospitals honored for efforts to prevent rise of drug-resistant germs

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is encouraging public awareness of appropriate use of antibiotics and antifungals during U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week. The annual observance is held November 18-24. As part of this year’s observance, IDPH is recognizing nearly 90 Illinois hospitals who have taken extra measures to prevent antimicrobial resistance, where bacteria and other germs can develop a resistance to the drugs that were designed to fight them.

As part of the awareness effort, Governor JB Pritzker has issued a proclamation and recorded a video to encourage Illinoisans to learn more about antimicrobial resistance and the steps they can take to protect themselves. You can find links to both at IDPH’s [US Antibiotic Awareness Week](#) webpage. You can get more information about antimicrobial resistance on the IDPH website at [Antimicrobial Stewardship](#).

“Antibiotics are powerful medicines that fight infections, but they can stop working if we don’t use them correctly,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “When we take antibiotics when they are not needed, germs can learn to fight back, making infections tougher to cure. This week, we’re celebrating nearly 90 Illinois hospitals for leading the way in using antibiotics wisely. When doctors, patients, and families all work together, we can keep these life-saving medicines working for everyone – now and in the future.”

Director Vohra notes that antibiotics do not treat viruses, such as those that cause colds, the flu, RSV, or COVID-19. Use of antibiotics when not medically recommended can increase the likelihood of antimicrobial resistance. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year, more than 2.8 million antimicrobial-resistant infections occur in the United States, and more than 35,000 people die as a result.

IDPH has created the [Acute Care Antimicrobial Stewardship Honor Roll](#) to recognize hospitals that have taken extra steps to implement best practices against antimicrobial resistance. While 98% of all Illinois hospitals have successfully implemented the Core Elements of Hospital Antibiotic Stewardship Programs as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the IDPH Honor Roll recognizes hospitals that have implemented specific, targeted strategies to improve and enhance those efforts. Those targeted strategies fall into six priority areas:

- **Hospital Leadership Commitment**, designating a staff physician and/or pharmacist with specific assigned antimicrobial stewardship responsibilities
- **Accountability**, having a stewardship program that is co-led by a physician and pharmacist
- **Stewardship Expertise**, where the program is led by personnel that have completed specialized training in antimicrobial stewardship
- **Action**, with facility-specific recommendations for treatment of common clinical conditions, and prospective audit and feedback or preauthorization for specific antibiotic agents
- **Tracking**, where the hospital submits antibiotic use data to the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN), and
- **Reporting**, where antibiotic use reports are provided at least annually to provide feedback to prescribers.

Honor roll status is awarded in three categories: Bronze, for hospitals that have implemented at least two of the six priorities; Silver, for hospitals implementing at least four priorities; and Gold, for hospitals that have implemented all six priorities. Nearly 90 Illinois hospitals are being honored this year; you can find the full list at [2025 Awardees](#). In addition, 24 hospitals received a Collaboration Distinction, which recognizes hospitals that demonstrate formal, documented, and sustained partnerships beyond their own institution to strengthen antimicrobial stewardship and improve antibiotic use across health care settings.

The overall goal of U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week is to get everyone working together to improve the global prescribing and use of antimicrobials such as antibiotic and antifungal drugs. The CDC estimates that as many as 30 percent of prescriptions for antibiotics are not medically necessary, representing approximately 47 million prescriptions.

The CDC encourages practitioners to talk with patients about when antibiotics are, and are not, appropriate, what other steps they can take to feel better, and when to seek additional care. The CDC has put together an easy reference chart to further explain when antibiotics should and should not be used.

Common Respiratory Infections	Common Cause			Are Antibiotics Needed?
	Virus	Virus or Bacteria	Bacteria	
Common cold/runny nose	✓			No
Sore throat (except strep)	✓			No
COVID-19	✓			No
Flu	✓			No
Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)*		✓		No*
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Strep throat			✓	Yes
Whooping cough			✓	Yes

* Studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help patients feel better.

In addition to working with providers on best practices, IDPH also reminds the general public of the important role they can play in preventing antimicrobial resistance. Good hygiene can reduce infections and lower the risk of drug resistance. Recommended preventive measures include regular hand-washing with soap and water (or using a hand sanitizer that's at least 60% alcohol); covering coughs and sneezes; staying home when sick; and getting recommended vaccines, including flu and COVID-19 shots.

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