

Be Antibiotics Aware: Protect your patient

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is urging healthcare professionals to prescribe antibiotics only when necessary to help fight antimicrobial resistance and the spread of superbugs and to protect their patients from antibiotic-related adverse drug events. During U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week and throughout the year, CDC promotes *Be Antibiotics Aware*, an educational effort to raise awareness about the importance of safe antibiotic prescribing and use.

The *Be Antibiotics Aware* initiative provides resources to help improve antibiotic prescribing among healthcare professionals and use among consumers.

CDC's *Be Antibiotics Aware* educational effort encourages healthcare professionals to:

- Only prescribe antibiotics when they are clinically indicated. Antibiotics are only needed to treat certain infections caused by bacteria, not viruses like those that cause COVID-19. You can do harm by prescribing antibiotics when they are not needed.
- Follow clinical guidelines on how best to evaluate and treat infections.
- Optimizing the use of diagnostic tests is critical for improving treatment of conditions like sepsis and stopping the spread of infections, including those caused by COVID-19.
- Always prescribe the right antibiotic, at the right dose, for the right duration, and at the right time.
 - Using the shortest effective duration of antibiotic therapy is a key antibiotic stewardship strategy. The goal is to optimize the treatment of the infection while minimizing the risks of side effects from antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance.
- Only prescribe antibiotics when they are needed. You can do harm by prescribing antibiotics that aren't needed.
- Talk to your patients about why they don't need antibiotics for a viral respiratory infection, what to do to feel better, and when to seek care again if they don't feel better.
- Talk to your patients and their families about possible harms from antibiotics, such as allergic reactions, *C. difficile*, and antimicrobial-resistant infections.
- Educate your patients and their families to recognize the signs and symptoms of worsening infection and sepsis, and to know when to seek medical care.
- If sepsis is suspected, gather patient information and immediately communicate it to hospital healthcare professionals. Antibiotics should be started as soon as possible when sepsis is suspected.

Be Antibiotics Aware has resources to help healthcare professionals (in outpatient and inpatient settings) educate patients and families about antibiotic use and risks for potential side effects. For more information, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/index.html>.