

Antibiotics and Seniors



Choosing Wisely NL



Antibiotics are some of the most useful and effective drugs available to doctors and patients to treat bacterial infections.

But they only work on bacteria.

Antibiotics don't have any effect on most colds, flus and coughs, which are caused by viruses.

When antibiotics are used to treat these illnesses, **it puts us all at risk.**



Whenever you can, you should try to use fewer antibiotics and only take them when your doctor suggests you should. When we use too many antibiotics we:

- Help make **more** drug-resistant bacteria
- Can experience **more** harmful side effects



Doctors, scientists and other professionals are coming together to try to reduce antibiotic overuse in this province. We want to stop prescribing antibiotics for illnesses **where there is no proven benefit** to you. We'll continue prescribing these drugs where they're needed, but if you don't need an antibiotic, you shouldn't be given one.

Resistant Bugs & Side Effects

Antibiotics are frequently prescribed for seniors with urinary tract and minor lung infections (bronchitis), even though patients who receive drugs for these infections don't get better any faster.



What happens when we over-prescribe antibiotics?

People who receive antibiotics, even when they **do** need them, can experience:

- rashes
- diarrhea
- other allergic reactions

Overusing antibiotics helps create bacteria that may not be killed by these drugs; each time we use them, we eliminate weaker bacteria, and the ones which can resist the drugs survive to make more resistant bacteria. This is how life-threatening bacteria like **c.difficile** and **MRSA** become stronger against drugs we use to treat them, making it harder to get rid of them.

Overuse in Newfoundland & Labrador

In 2014, doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador prescribed more antibiotics than doctors in any other province in Canada – a third more often than the province with the second highest use rate. It is critical that we reduce our antibiotic consumption.



What do we do instead of taking an antibiotic?

Most viral infections will clear up on their own after a few days, but to help you feel better faster we recommend:

- lots of bed rest
- lots of clear fluids, like water or juice
- if you have a fever, try an anti-inflammatory (like acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- if you have a stuffy nose, try a saline spray or drops
- if you have a sore throat, try gargling with some warm salt water

If you don't need an antibiotic, why take the risk?

For more info: talk to your doctor, call the provincial health line (811), or visit

www.choosingwiselynl.ca