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### **Department of Health Supports “Get Smart about Antibiotics Week”**

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health is part of a national campaign, led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, called “Get Smart about Antibiotics.” The campaign is being featured nationally this week with its messaging intended to educate the public and healthcare providers about the importance of using antibiotic medications wisely. Antibiotics are an essential tool to combat life-threatening bacterial diseases. However, when antibiotics are taken unnecessarily, they can do more harm than good. Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria change in a way that reduces or eliminates their effectiveness and it has become a pressing public health threat. Healthcare providers, patients, policy makers and others must work together to improve appropriate antibiotic use to improve patient safety and save lives.

The New Mexico Department of Health Healthcare-associated Infections Program and the New Mexico Healthcare-associated Infections Advisory Committee work closely with healthcare facilities, providers and the public to monitor and reduce healthcare-associated infections. For example, the current *Clostridium difficile* Infections Prevention Project is working with healthcare facilities to prevent this potentially life-threatening bacterial infection. One aspect of the prevention project focuses on the appropriate use of antibiotics.

The New Mexico Department of Health recommends:

- Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. Do not skip doses or stop early, even if you start feeling better.
- Take antibiotics only that have been prescribed for you. Do not share or use leftover antibiotics.
- Prevent infections by practicing good hand hygiene and getting recommended vaccines. Remember that antibiotics don’t cure the flu and that vaccinations are now available for the current flu season.
- Do not ask for antibiotics when your healthcare provider thinks you do not need them. Remember that antibiotics have side effects and that when you don’t need an antibiotic, taking one may do more harm than good.



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For more information regarding proper antibiotic use, visit the New Mexico Department of Health's website at <http://www.health.state.nm.us/ERD/antibiotics.shtml>.

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