

NEWS OF HEALTH

Antibiotics: Not For Respiratory Infections

(NAPSA)—Doctors are increasingly finding that using antibiotics when not needed to treat an illness can do more harm than good.

To help make people aware of some of the dangers of using antibiotics inappropriately, the American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM) has released a set of guidelines which say that antibiotics are not needed for most upper respiratory tract infections.

Upper respiratory tract infections include sinusitis, bronchitis, sore throat and common colds. However, these conditions are not generally caused by bacteria, but by viruses—against which antibiotics are useless. In addition, taking antibiotics when you don't need them can cause them not to work when you do need them, as bacteria in your body may become resistant.

"Up to 75 percent of all antibiotics prescribed each year are associated with treating upper respiratory tract infections. Unfortunately, most of these prescriptions are unnecessary," says Sandra A. Fryhofer, president of ACP-ASIM. "As a professional organization representing internists, who treat the majority of adult patients, we decided that we might best affect the problems of overuse and inappropriate antibiotic use by developing guidelines for management of common respiratory tract infections."

ACP-ASIM offers these facts to remember about respiratory tract infections:



When a person is hit with a respiratory tract infection, antibiotics are not the standard treatment.

- Respiratory infections usually last for two to three weeks and will resolve themselves on their own;
- Only a small percentage of upper respiratory tract infections are caused by bacteria;
- Just because you may have received an antibiotic in the past for an upper respiratory tract infection does not mean that you should get the same treatment again; and
- The best way to manage upper respiratory tract infections are over-the-counter cold remedies such as nasal sprays, decongestants, throat lozenges and gargles.

To expedite doctor-patient discussions about appropriate use of antibiotics and the dangers of antibiotic resistance, ACP-ASIM has developed a patient education brochure that is available by calling 1-800-523-1546 ext. 2600. The information is also available online at www.doctorsforadults.com.