

## Use Antibiotics Wisely

Two kinds of germs make us become sick - **bacteria** and **viruses**. When you go to see your doctor, that is what he or she tries to figure out. Do you have a virus or bacteria? If you have **bacteria**, like strep throat or certain types of pneumonia, you will often need an antibiotic to get better.

If you have a **virus**, like a cold or the flu, an antibiotic can't help you. In fact, it has been shown to possibly cause harm. Overuse of antibiotics has caused resistant bacteria to develop. Antibiotics cannot cure these resistant bacteria—also called “super bugs.”

### **When you have a virus, here are some ways to take care of yourself:**

- Drink more fluids like water, tea, or soup.
- Get more rest.
- Wash your hands, and keep your own towel separate from others.
- Use a cool mist vaporizer for a stuffy head or chest.
- Use saline nasal drops to help with a stuffy nose.
- Use ice chips, sore-throat spray, or lozenges for a sore throat.

### **See your doctor if you have the following:**

- A persistent fever of 101° or a fever over 103°.
- Trouble breathing or your chest hurts.
- Very red sore throat with white patches.
- Severe headache.
- Symptoms that get worse.

### **If you are given an antibiotic:**

- Follow the directions on how to take it carefully.
- Use the antibiotic until it is gone, even if you start feeling better.
- Don't share an antibiotic with anyone.
- Call the doctor if you're not feeling better in a couple days or after finishing the antibiotic.

Upper Peninsula Health Plan wants to help our members know about antibiotics and how to use them wisely. Talk to your doctor about the right treatment for your illness.

*Source: August 2003 Member Notes newsletter*