

Governor Tim Walz has proclaimed Nov. 18–24 “[Antibiotic Awareness Week \(PDF\)](#)” in Minnesota. The week coincides with [U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week \(USAAW\)](#) and similar observances across the globe to raise awareness of antibiotic resistance and the importance of improving how antibiotics are used.

“Antibiotics are critical to medicine and public health,” said Dr. Amanda Beaudoin, director of the Minnesota One Health Antibiotic Stewardship Collaborative. “We count on them daily to treat bacterial infections, but their impact is waning. For them to remain effective, we must commit to using them responsibly.”

Each year in the U.S., millions of unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions are written in doctors’ offices, dental clinics, emergency rooms, and hospitals. During cold and flu season, it can be tempting to insist on an antibiotic from a health care provider to help one feel better, but antibiotics will not work against the common cold, influenza, and other viral illnesses, like COVID-19. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed can do more harm than good, by increasing one’s risk of a bad reaction to a medication or getting an antibiotic-resistant infection later.

There are some things that everyone can do to help fight antibiotic resistance:

- Reduce the need for antibiotics by avoiding infections. Wash your hands properly, cover your cough, stay home if you are sick, and stay up to date with recommended vaccinations.
- Do not ask for antibiotics if your health care provider (including your dentist) thinks they are unnecessary.
- When you are prescribed antibiotics, take them exactly as directed and for the full amount of time directed.
- Only take antibiotics prescribed for you; do not share or use leftover antibiotics. Antibiotics treat specific infections. Taking the wrong medicine might make things worse.
- Do not save antibiotics for your next illness. Properly dispose of any leftover medication as soon as the prescribed course of treatment is completed. Information on proper disposal of medication can be found at [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency: Don't flush medicines down the drain](#).

Minnesota’s commitment to antibiotic stewardship goes beyond an awareness week and beyond health care. MDH works with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and other partners to ensure that progress on appropriate antibiotic use is made in all settings where antibiotics are used, including in the veterinary clinic and on the farm. Together, state agencies and partners also ensure that pharmaceutical drugs, including antibiotics, are disposed of properly to prevent them from ending up in our natural environment.