

**November 13, 2012**

**Media contact:** Jonathan Modie; 971-246-9139; [PHD.Communications@state.or.us](mailto:PHD.Communications@state.or.us)

**AWARE program works to reduce unneeded antibiotic use**  
*Oregon second-lowest in nation in antibiotic use, but there's more to be done*

Oregon has the second-lowest rate of antibiotic use in the nation behind Alaska. But inappropriate antibiotic use, which can lead to drug resistance and adverse side effects, remains a threat, public health officials say.

Ann Thomas, M.D., medical director for Oregon Health Authority's Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education (AWARE) program, says the study showing Oregon's low rate is good news. But the state can't rest on its laurels.

"Antibiotics are useful medications in treating certain infections, but it's important that they're used only when necessary," Thomas said. "Overuse of antibiotics leads to infections that are difficult to treat."

The study was done in 2010 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

As part of its ongoing effort to urge consumers to help reduce inappropriate use of antibiotics, AWARE, funded by the CDC, is taking part in "Get Smart About Antibiotics Week" this week. AWARE is partnering with the Oregon State University College of Pharmacy in "AWARE on the Square," set for 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 16, at Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square. The free public event will offer educational information and activities promoting appropriate antibiotic use and hand hygiene. AWARE and OSU also will provide free flu vaccinations for uninsured adults from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

(more)

Antibiotics are particularly inappropriate for colds and the flu, which are caused by viruses, Thomas says. Antibiotics are ineffective for treating flu or cold viruses. Taking antibiotics when they're not needed or not as prescribed increases a person's risk for later antibiotic-resistant infections.

Thomas recommends health care providers take time to educate their patients about antibiotic resistance and the possibility of serious side effects, including allergic reactions that result in a rash and anaphylaxis, and send thousands of patients to the emergency room every year.

She also says consumers shouldn't pressure their providers to prescribe antibiotics for colds and the flu. Consumers appropriately prescribed antibiotics for bacterial infections, however, should take every dose, even if symptoms improve, since not doing so contributes to the drug resistance. And consumers should never share antibiotics, since individuals taking antibiotics not prescribed to them can experience adverse reactions.

"Even though Oregon health care providers are doing a good job in not prescribing antibiotics excessively, we still find bacteria that are resistant to commonly used drugs in our communities," Thomas says. "For a healthy Oregon, we should remain vigilant in keeping antibiotic use low."

To learn more about Oregon AWARE and "Get Smart About Antibiotics Week," visit the [AWARE website](#) or call 971-673-1111.

# # #