



National Prescribing Service Limited

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Help prevent global antibiotic resistance: only take it if you need it**

It's that time of year again when it seems everyone around you has a cough or cold. While many people go to see their GP expecting to be prescribed antibiotics, the National Prescribing Service Ltd (NPS) urges people to try other remedies first.

"Antibiotics have no effect on infections caused by viruses, and the common cold and seasonal influenza are viruses," NPS Deputy CEO, Karen Kaye said.

Common colds last around 7–10 days and during this time people can expect to have a blocked or runny nose, sore throat and possible cough. Seasonal influenza or 'flu is a different type of virus to common colds and includes fever and aches and pain.

"The simplest, most cost-effective remedies if you have a cold are rest and fluids. If you have a headache, muscle pain, or fever take paracetamol or ibuprofen, but be careful if you are taking a cough and cold preparation as these often already contain pain relief," Ms Kaye said.

"A course of antibiotics won't help you get over your cold faster, it won't ease the symptoms, and it won't stop you passing the virus on to other people. Taking antibiotics when you don't need to only increases antibiotic resistance both in you as an individual and in the community."

NPS estimates that more than 3 million antibiotic prescriptions are wasted on viral infections each year. Not only does this increase antibiotic resistance, it costs the community millions of dollars.

"Doctors often feel pressured to prescribe something when a patient specifically requests it. Rather than focusing only on what health professionals are doing, we want people to learn when they do and don't need antibiotics, so they can take more responsibility for their own health," Ms Kaye said.

Most coughs don't need antibiotics, but if you are a smoker or you're experiencing other symptoms like wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness you should see a doctor. Similarly if your cough is chronic or if you are concerned about the duration and severity of your cough you should speak to your GP.

"Research has shown that cough and cold medicines have limited effect. If your cough is problematic you should be seeing your GP. If not, drinking honey and lemon mixes can be as effective as some over-the-counter cough mixtures," Ms Kaye said.

Not all antibiotics are the same as different active ingredients treat different infections. To find out the active ingredient in your medicine go to [www.nps.org.au/medicinenamefinder](http://www.nps.org.au/medicinenamefinder) and enter the name of the medicine you have been prescribed.

"Getting to know your medicines will help you understand what you have been prescribed and why. Read the consumer medicine information leaflet, which can also be downloaded via the Medicine Name Finder, and discuss antibiotic use with your doctor," Ms Kaye said.

For more information about common colds visit [www.nps.org.au/consumers/campaigns/ccncs](http://www.nps.org.au/consumers/campaigns/ccncs)

**ENDS**

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