



Media Release

Make sure you don't miss the target with antibiotic use – PHARMAC

New Zealanders are being urged to ensure their antibiotic use is well targeted, with the launch of the PHARMAC-led Wise Use of Antibiotics campaign today.

In its 11th year, the Wise Use of Antibiotics campaign encourages appropriate use of antibiotics to ensure they continue to be effective in years to come. This includes using them to fight illness caused by bacteria, rather than viruses such as colds and flu.

PHARMAC Medical Director Peter Moodie, who spoke at today's launch at Wellington's Clyde Quay School, says a lot of progress had been made, however it is vital the appropriate use of these important drugs continues.

“New Zealand is not alone in this battle with other countries around the world, such as the UK, Canada and Australia, running similar campaigns urging people to ensure they only use antibiotics when they are really needed. If they are taken unnecessarily for illnesses such as colds and the flu we run the real risk of bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics.”

Dr Moodie says awareness has increased in the decade since the campaign was launched, however work needs to continue in this area.

“We can not afford to be complacent, and people need to continue to take on board the importance of maintaining the effectiveness of antibiotics. Health professionals are well placed to tell you whether or not you need an antibiotic to fight your ills.

“If in doubt, check it out’ is the catchphrase this year, and we encourage people to visit their doctor to get things checked out by an expert if they have any concerns.”

He says it is understandable that people look to a pill to fight an illness such as a cold or flu, however it just won't work.

“It's common sense remedies which will work with a cold or the flu – rest, keep warm, take paracetamol and drink plenty of fluids. Prevention is another key component in battling winter ills – remember to cover your sneeze with a tissue and don't share drinks or cups with others.”

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The other important factor in ensuring antibiotics remain effective is for people to take the full course of antibiotics prescribed to them, not stopping when they feel better, he says.

The PHARMAC-led campaign is supported by The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, Plunket, the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand, the Pharmacy Guild, doctors' groups and PHOs around New Zealand.

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For more information please call (021) 429-212.

Note to reporters/photo editors: The launch provided a good photo opportunity, with a giant size virus and bacteria interacting with children. There was also a giant target illustrating the need for antibiotics to be well targeted. Photos are available on request.