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Health column: Take care, not antibiotics

Dr Jonathan Wells: Chair and Clinical Lead for NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group

Antibiotics are a group of medicines that are used to help fight serious infections caused by bacteria. Patients often request them for things that they can't treat - like colds, flu or other viral infections - not only are they of no benefit but they can become less effective over time against bacteria they're intended to treat.

We need to think about reducing our use of antibiotics and ensuring they are only used when needed to treat bacterial infections. It's important we use antibiotics in the right way to slow down resistance. There are very few new antibiotics in development, so it's vital we use our existing antibiotics wisely and make sure these lifesaving medicines continue to stay effective.

At NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group we are working closely with other health professionals across the county to ensure patients are aware of the need to use antibiotics responsibly.

The '**Take Care, not Antibiotics**' campaign aims to educate people about certain measures that can be taken to protect them from developing antibiotic resistant to infections such as Clostridium Difficile, (Cdiff). We've developed a number of resources for the public and health professionals to help raise awareness and spread the message about the correct use of antibiotics, including a video featuring our Lead Nurse for Quality and Patient Safety, a 'Key Facts About Antibiotics' leaflet and an awareness poster. All these can be downloaded from our website at www.redditchandbromsgroveccg.nhs.uk

To help prevent the emergence and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, I urge patients to think about the drugs they are requesting and to remember the following list of dos and don'ts:

- **Do** remember that antibiotics are important medicines and should only be taken when prescribed by your doctor or other health professional.
- **Do** complete the prescribed course even if you feel better, because not taking the full course encourages the emergence of resistance.
- **Do** remember that antibiotics cannot help you recover from infections caused by viruses, such as common colds or flu, because antibiotics are effective only against bacterial infections.
- **Don't** share your antibiotics with anyone else because they are prescribed for you only.
- **Don't** forget that resistant bacteria don't just infect you, they spread to other people in close contact with you.
- **Don't** forget that antibiotics can upset the natural balance of bacteria in your body. This allows other organisms to increase and can result in diarrhea and thrush.

For information about the safe use of antibiotics speak to your GP or visit the NHS Choices site www.nhs.uk

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Notes for Editors

- For more information about NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group please visit www.redditchandbromsgroveccg.nhs.uk

- NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG represent 22 GP practices and serve a patient population of 170,000 patients.
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- For more information please contact Hardeep Cheema, Communications Manager on 07423 524211 or email Hardeep.Cheema@worcestershire.nhs.uk