

# Pharmacists Warn Public About the Risk of Antibiotic Misuse



European Antibiotics Awareness Day takes place on Thursday 18th November

IPU, Thursday 18 November, 2021: With over 90% of the population in Ireland now vaccinated against COVID-19, pharmacists are cautioning against potential misuse of antibiotics as common colds and flus begin to circulate among the public again this year.

Data collated by HMR on behalf of the IPU saw a significant drop in patients being prescribed antibiotics due to a reduction in infections circulating last winter. December 2020 saw prescriptions nearly halved when compared to the same month in 2019. However, since the economy and society have reopened in 2021 prescriptions for antibiotics have been rising, with the level of antibiotics dispensed by community pharmacies increasing month on month since the beginning of the summer.

IPU President and community pharmacist, Dermot Twomey said, *“The upward trend in prescriptions for antibiotics we are seeing since restrictions started to lift is not unexpected. However, it’s important to ensure that antimicrobials such as antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiprotozoals are taken correctly.”*

The reopening of society over the past number of months has seen a rise in people suffering conditions such as cold, flu, sore throats and diarrhoea, which are all becoming more common again. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) is urging all stakeholders to be proactive in fighting antibiotic resistance.

Key advice provided by the Irish Pharmacy Union to combat the risks are:

- 1. Don't take antibiotics unless specifically prescribed for you by your doctor*
- 2. Antibiotics are generally not appropriate for colds and flu; sore throat, coughs, vomiting and diarrhoea*
- 3. If you do need to take an antibiotic, take it exactly as prescribed and finish the full course even if you are feeling better*
- 4. Do not save antibiotics for later use or share them with others*
- 5. Don't expect to be prescribed antibiotics for viral conditions*
- 6. Avail of vaccines for conditions such as COVID-19 and the flu at a local pharmacy.*

Mr Twomey concluded by reminding patients that antibiotics cannot be used to treat or prevent COVID-19, *"It's important to remember that if you have COVID-19 symptoms, you should not medicate with antibiotics; instead you should immediately isolate and arrange for a PCR test through the national testing system. Similarly, antibiotics will do nothing for cold, flu or stomach bugs, but your pharmacist can provide you with advice on treatments that can help by alleviating your symptoms."*