

Media Release

New Zealanders wising up to the best use of antibiotics

Almost nine out of ten New Zealanders are aware of the best way to treat colds and the flu – and it's not antibiotics.

New Colmar Brunton research conducted as part of the PHARMAC-led Wise Use of Antibiotics campaign shows that 87% of people surveyed know the best way to treat colds and the flu is rest and drinking plenty of fluid.

In addition, 58% were also aware that colds and flu cannot be treated effectively with antibiotics.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says the increasing level of awareness of the best way to treat colds and flu is a shot in the arm for the international fight against antibiotic resistance.

“A key contributor to the growth of antibiotic resistance is unnecessary use of these drugs. That's why it's so important to reduce inappropriate use of antibiotics in treating colds and the flu.”

Antibiotic resistance is an area of growing international concern with certain antibiotic-resistant bacteria superbugs such as MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) and *E.coli* causing major health problems. In New Zealand the antibiotic-resistant pneumococcal bacteria, which commonly causes sinusitis, bronchitis and pneumonia, remains a significant problem area.

The Colmar Brunton research, carried out last month, also showed that 75% of people who visited the doctor with flu symptoms were not disappointed if they were not prescribed antibiotics.

Peter Moodie says while this figure has grown over the last seven years of the campaign, the latest results indicate that one in four people still expect to be prescribed antibiotics for a cold or flu.

“This shows the importance of continuing to educate people that colds and the flu are not best treated with antibiotics. We need to remain vigilant if we are to hold antibiotic resistance at bay.”

“Another key point to remember is that people should visit their doctor if they are in any doubt. For many people this has been made easier through the introduction of PHOs,” he says.

[ends]

For more information contact Simon England on 021 863 342