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WHO: Don't take antibiotics unless prescribed

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WHO advises prescribed consumption of antibiotics



Singapore:Ã?Â The world health organization (WHO) has advised the public to use antibiotics only when prescribed by a doctor.Ã?Â Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses. Viruses, which cause nine-out-of-10 sore throats and all cases of influenza, are not killed by antibiotics. Antibiotics kill bacteria.Ã?Â

Taking antibiotics unnecessarily weakens their ability to work against infections when they are needed. This enables bacteria develop resistance to antibiotics. On European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2012, WHO advises public to use antibiotics only when and as prescribed by a doctor.

"Since their discovery over 70 years ago, antibiotics have kept most of us alive by overcoming bacterial infections that could otherwise have been fatal. The use of antibiotics and vaccines has lengthened our life-spans by 20 years on average," said Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, regional director, Europe, WHO. "If we want to retain this medical miracle, we must fully understand when antibiotics work and when they do not work, and act accordingly. This is a matter for everybody, from those who set policies and strategies, carry out research, and produce and distribute antibiotics to those who prescribe and use them."

Awareness of the effects of over-using and mis-using antibiotics is higher globally but lower in countries where antibiotics are less regulated and can be obtained over the counter, without prescription. A global WHO survey indicated that over half of all medicines, including antibiotics, are prescribed, dispensed or sold inappropriately, while half of all patients fail to take medicines correctly. This leads to increased antibiotic resistance and thereby decreases the number of effective antibiotics. In addition, it is alarming that no new antibiotic classes have been discovered in the last 25 years, despite the efforts of research.