

Getting The Facts For This Flu Season [Ⓟ]

(NAPSA)—Winter brings heightened concerns for people across the country about what they can do to prevent exposure to influenza (often called the flu) and its devastating effects.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 10% - 20% of Americans come down with the flu during each flu season. Although most people recover from the illness, the CDC estimates that in the United States more than 100,000 people are hospitalized and an estimated 36,000 people die from the flu and its complications every year.

Is It Really the Flu?

During the winter, family members, friends and co-workers become self-appointed doctors as they “diagnose” colds, flu and other ailments in their loved ones. However, seeking a diagnosis from anyone other than a physician is never a good idea.

Often, people become confused about whether they need to treat the sniffles, cough and aches with rest and fluids or with an antibiotic. Physicians report that often patients schedule appointments to request an antibiotic even though an antibiotic might not be appropriate.

What Patients Need to Know About Antibiotics

Two main types of germs cause infections—viruses and bacteria. The flu is caused by a virus, while other conditions commonly mis-

taken for the flu—like sinusitis and bronchitis—may be caused by bacteria or viruses. The flu cannot be treated with antibiotics, but if your physician diagnoses you with a bacterial infection, she or he may prescribe antibiotics.

Antibiotics are beneficial when used appropriately. Ask your doctor or healthcare provider if an antibiotic may be beneficial for your illness, and follow the advice you get. Following are tips to maximize the benefits of appropriate antibiotic use:

- Do not take an antibiotic for a viral infection like a cold or the flu.

- Take the prescription precisely as it's written, including taking the entire prescription. Using only part of the medication means only part of the infection has been treated.

- Do not save some of your antibiotic for the next time you get sick.

- Do not take an antibiotic that is prescribed for someone else.

A patient resource is available to help you accurately describe symptoms to your physician in order to help differentiate among a cold, flu and bacterial infections, so you receive the best, most appropriate medical treatment. For more information about antibiotics, managing a bacterial infection and to access this patient resource, visit www.levaquin.com.