Family physicians are essential, front-line partners in the fight against antibiotic resistance. The first step is using current clinical guidelines to support rational and appropriate antibiotic prescribing, especially for common viral URIs. Second, communicating with patients about when and why antibiotics may not be necessary, while recommending symptomatic relief and appropriate steps for follow-up if their symptoms do not resolve, will lead to a better-educated patient population. Although some physicians feel that “just one” unnecessary prescription does not matter, each prescription does make a difference and can affect resistance locally, regionally, and nationally. Third, if an antibiotic is needed, encouraging adherence and discussing potential adverse effects can help educate and empower patients.

The actions of each and every physician and patient can make a difference. We must all work together to get smarter about antibiotic prescribing and usage. For information on Get Smart materials or resources, or to find out how to become a Get Smart About Antibiotics Week partner, visit http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart or e-mail getsmart@cdc.gov.

Address correspondence to Rebecca M. Roberts, MS, at RMRoberts@cdc.gov. Reprints are not available from the authors.

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