



# SET TO DOWN THAT PILL? JUST HOLD ON ...

People risk resistance and severe side effects with wanton consumption of antibiotics, health research chief warns

By Pongphon Sarnsamak

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The Public Health Ministry says as much as Bt76 billion is wasted on needless prescriptions of drugs.

It says the unnecessary prescription of antibiotics cost Bt16 billion alone.

The chief of the Health Systems Research Institute, Dr Pongpisuth Jongudom, says unwarranted prescription can result in drug resistance, poor patient outcomes, adverse drug reactions and wasted resources.

Imported drugs cost Bt38 billion a year. The most prescribed are antibiotics, which cost Bt7.5 billion a year. Most people believe antibiotics are necessary.

Dr Pisonthi Chongtrakul says penicillin is the most common antibiotic and used to treat bacteria. It does not work with viruses.

"The misuse of antibiotics can cause severe side effects like skin shedding and blindness. Some drugs affect the liver and kidneys," he says.

He suggests antibiotics be used only with specific symptoms, to guard against drug re-



sistance. General fevers or sore throats can be fought off by patients immune systems. "If you have a cough, gargle salt water for a few days," he says.

The Food and Drug Administration is introducing an Antibiotic Smart Use project in conjunction with the World Health Organisation to reduce the misuse of antibiotics.

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Dr Pisonthi Chongtrakul