Dear UAW Trust Member,

Last summer, the UAW Retiree Medical Benefits Trust (the “Trust”) introduced a new program called Choosing Wisely®. Choosing Wisely, a national program created by the ABIM Foundation (American Board of Internal Medicine) and Consumer Reports, encourages conversations between you and your doctor. Remember, when you’re actively engaged in your health care, you can have improved health outcomes.

Now that cold and flu season is here, we want to remind you that catching a virus isn't the only danger—the overuse of antibiotics can also make you sick. In fact, misuse of antibiotics may do more harm than good. While antibiotics are important drugs and considered one of the keystones of modern medicine, excessive use continues to generate unwanted side effects.

Antibiotics are meant to be used against bacterial infections, such as strep throat or bacterial skin infections. Although antibiotics kill bacteria, they are not effective against viruses. Therefore, they will not be effective against viral infections such as colds, most coughs, many types of sore throat and the flu.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The new year symbolizes the chance for a fresh start. It's a great time to set goals to be happier and healthier in the coming year. One way to accomplish that is to utilize your office visit coverage. And, make sure you get an annual flu vaccination—one of the most effective tools against the flu virus. Be sure to protect yourself and those around you by getting a flu shot every year. Finally, before going to the doctor, take a look at the five questions on the reverse side of this letter. Use those questions to talk to your doctor about when you need antibiotics—and when you don’t.

When you use antibiotics appropriately, you do the best for your health, your family’s health and the health of those around you. We want to keep you healthy by providing you resources about the proper use of antibiotics. You can find more helpful information on health topics in the Choosing Wisely section of our website, www.uawtrust.org.
5 QUESTIONS to Ask Your Doctor Before You Take Antibiotics

1 Do I really need antibiotics? Antibiotics fight bacterial infections, like strep throat, whooping cough and symptomatic bladder infections. But they don’t fight viruses—like common colds, flu, or most sore throats and sinus infections. Ask if you have a bacterial infection.

2 What are the risks? Antibiotics can cause diarrhea, vomiting, and more. They can also lead to “antibiotic resistance”—if you use antibiotics when you don’t need them, they may not work when you do need them.

3 Are there simpler, safer options? Sometimes all you need is rest and plenty of liquid. You can also ask about antibiotic ointments and drops for conditions like pink eye or swimmer’s ear.

4 How much do they cost? Antibiotics are usually not expensive. But if you take them when you don’t need them, they may not work for you in the future—and that may cost you a lot of time and money.

5 How do I safely take antibiotics? If your doctor prescribes antibiotics, take them exactly as directed, even if you feel better.

Use these 5 questions to talk to your doctor about when you need antibiotics—and when you don’t.

Antibiotics can help prevent or treat some infections. But if you use them for the wrong reason, they may cause unnecessary harm. Talk to your doctor to make sure you only use antibiotics for the right reasons—and at the right time.

http://ConsumerHealthChoices.org/antibiotics

For more information on this topic and access to other resources, visit us at www.uawtrust.org.