

Appropriate Antibiotic Use

Antibiotics are important medications that help treat bacterial infections, but they are not without risk. Antibiotics do **NOT** kill viruses, and most common respiratory infections (colds, bronchitis, pinkeye) are caused by viruses. Overuse of antibiotics has resulted in bacterial resistance, not only for yourself, but for those around you as well. Bacterial resistance can make future infections in you, and the community in general, harder to treat. It takes at least 10-15 years to get a new antibiotic from the idea phase to available at your local pharmacy.

What are some adverse events that can occur from use of antibiotics?

- ◆ 1 in 4 risk of diarrhea
- ◆ 1 in 50 chance of developing a rash/hives or sunburn
- ◆ 1 in a 1000 chance of an anaphylactic reaction (severe, rapidly developing allergic reaction)
- ◆ Serious super-infections of the colon causing severe diarrhea, called *Clostridium difficile colitis*, can occur. It can occur after taking even 1 dose of an antibiotic. This is no longer a rare infection and can now occur in healthy individuals.
- ◆ Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is due to antibiotic over-use.
- ◆ Good bacteria are also killed. 1 dose of an antibiotic can wipe out your normal gut flora, which can seriously affect your immune health and take months for the flora to replenish.
- ◆ If you are ill and take an antibiotic and then see a medical provider, that antibiotic can interfere with throat or urine cultures that may be needed for diagnosis.

What should be done?

- ◆ Take your course of medication exactly as your health care provider prescribes. Take the antibiotic for the number of days that is prescribed.
- ◆ Ask questions if you do not understand.
- ◆ Do not take someone else's antibiotics.

- ◆ Do not take an antibiotic for cold symptoms. It will not shorten the course of the cold or make it milder. Only time and symptomatic treatment will cure a common cold. If you have a sore throat and also have runny nose and/or cough, the sore throat is usually viral. In young adults, strep throat is less common than a sore throat caused by a virus. Coughing for 2 weeks, sometimes longer, is part of a common cold.
- ◆ Purchasing antibiotics over the internet is risky because you are not guaranteed to receive the actual medication.

For more information:

www.cdc.gov/drugresistance