

What to do about Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotics are drugs that fight infections caused by bacteria. They have transformed medical care and have dramatically reduced illness and death from infectious diseases. Physicians have been prescribing antibiotics for over 40 years, however this past decade there has been a rise in the spread of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance is now among the CDC's (Center for Disease Control) primary concerns as a result of recent reports. Due to increasing concerns about this public health threat, everyone should understand the need for prudent use of antibiotics – which is key to controlling resistance.

WHAT IS RESISTANCE?

Antibiotic use promotes development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Resistance occurs when bacteria change in a way that reduces or eliminates the effectiveness of drugs, chemicals, or other agents designed to cure or prevent infections. The bacteria survive and continue to multiply causing more harm. Widespread use of antibiotics promotes the spread of antibiotic resistance. Each time we take antibiotics, sensitive bacteria are killed, but resistant ones may be left to grow and multiply. Repeated and improper use of antibiotics are some of the main causes of the increase in resistant bacteria. These resistant bacteria can also be spread to others in the family and the community.

YOU CAN HELP!

- Talk with your health care provider about antibiotic resistance.
- Ask whether an antibiotic is likely to be beneficial for your illness.
- Ask if there is an alternative you could use to feel better.
- Do not take an antibiotic for a viral infection like a cold or the flu.
- Do not save your antibiotics for the next time you get sick.
- Take an antibiotic exactly as the doctor indicates.
- Do not pressure your provider to prescribe an antibiotic.
- Do not take an antibiotic that is prescribed for someone else.

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This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

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