

ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotics are powerful medicines that fight bacterial infections. Used properly, antibiotics can save lives. They either kill bacteria or keep them from reproducing. Your body's natural defenses can usually take it from there. Antibiotics do not fight infections caused by viruses, such as:

- Colds
- Flu
- Most coughs and bronchitis
- Sore throats, unless caused by strep

If a virus is making you sick, taking antibiotics may do more harm than good. Each time you take antibiotics, you increase the chances that bacteria in your body will be able to resist them. Each time you take an antibiotic unnecessarily or improperly, you increase your chance of developing drug-resistant bacteria. So it is really important to take antibiotics only when necessary. Because of these resistant bacteria, some diseases that used to be easy to treat are now becoming nearly impossible to treat. Later, you could get or spread an infection that those antibiotics cannot cure.

When you take antibiotics, follow the directions carefully. It is important to finish your medicine even if you feel better. Do not save antibiotics for later or use someone else's prescription.

REMEMBER:

- Remember that antibiotics don't work against colds and flu, and that unnecessary antibiotics can be harmful.
- Talk to your health care provider about antibiotics and find out about the differences between viruses and bacteria --and when antibiotics should and shouldn't be used.
- If you do get an antibiotic, be sure to take it exactly as prescribed--that may help decrease the development of resistant bacteria.
- Antibiotic resistance is particularly dangerous for children, but it can occur in adults as well.

If we use antibiotics appropriately we can avoid developing drug resistance. We just need to take our medicine exactly as it is prescribed and not expect to take antibiotics every time we're sick.

Additional Information:

- *Antibiotics: When They Can and Can't Help.* Provided by the American Academy of Family Physicians.
<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/infections/protect/680.html>
- *Problem of Antibiotic Resistance.* Provided by the NIH.
<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/antimicro.htm>
- *Antibiotics. Too much of a good thing.* Provided by the MAYO Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/antibiotics/FL00075>

Source: Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
Reviewed 11/2007.

This pamphlet is provided for informational purposes only. It is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or treatment. This is not a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. If you have any questions or concerns, consult with your physician. Use of trade names is for identification purposes only and does not imply endorsement by St. Anthony's Physician Organization.