REACH Mass Newsletter
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Antibiotic Resistance

"Antibiotic resistance" is a growing threat to public health. Here is information about what it is and how we can stop its spread in our communities.

What is "antibiotic resistance?"

Antibiotics kill bacteria that cause infections including some ear infections and strep throats. However, many bacteria are learning to fight off antibiotics that used to work well against them. These bacteria are "antibiotic resistant."

Why should we be concerned about antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotic resistant bacteria are harder to treat. They may require higher doses or a different antibiotic than usual. Rarely, bacteria may become resistant to so many antibiotics that a child will need to be hospitalized for treatment.

How does antibiotic resistance spread?

Bacteria "communicate" with each other, allowing antibiotic resistant bacteria to share their survival secrets with each other so even more bacteria become antibiotic resistant. Since we carry bacteria with us all the time, resistant bacteria can be spread to others with whom we have close contact, as in families or child care settings.

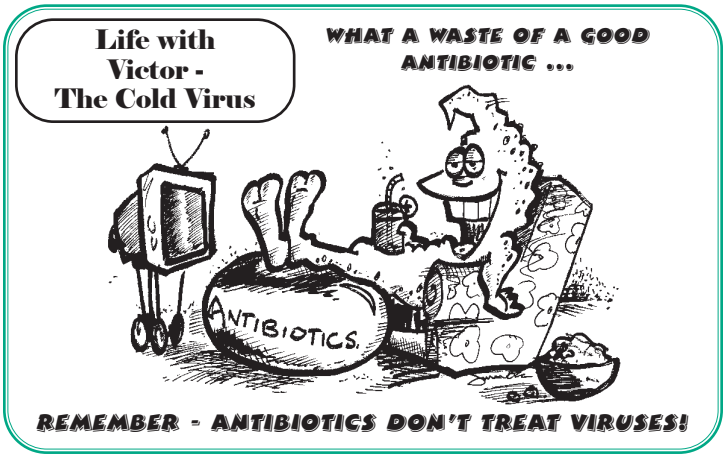
My child has taken a lot of antibiotics this winter. Should I be concerned she may become resistant to antibiotics?

No. Although many people believe it is a person who becomes "antibiotic resistant," it is actually the bacteria responsible for infections that develop resistance to a specific antibiotic. So, even if an antibiotic (like amoxicillin) did not work well for an infection several months ago, your child is not "resistant to amoxicillin." The medicine can still be used to treat a new infection in your child.

What can we do about the problem of antibiotic resistance?

Most importantly, antibiotics should be used only when your doctor thinks your child has a bacterial infection. Many infections including colds, coughs, most sore throats and some ear infections are caused by viruses which antibiotics don't help. Here are some other things that you can do:

- Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
- Always finish the prescription.
- Never share antibiotics with others.
- Never save antibiotics for future illnesses.
- Don't request or accept an antibiotic for a viral illness.



Wash Those Hands!

Did you know that unwashed hands are the primary carriers of infections? And that handwashing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of viral infection? So, wash your hands often and when you do-

- Use soap and warm running water.
  (NOTE: Antibacterial soap is no better than ordinary soap for preventing infections.)
- Rub your hands together for at least 10-15 seconds to make a good lather - Or as long as it takes to say the ABC's.
- Wash the palms and backs of your hands, wrists, between fingers and under the fingernails.
- Rinse well.
- Dry hands with a paper towel. Use the paper towel to shut off the water.

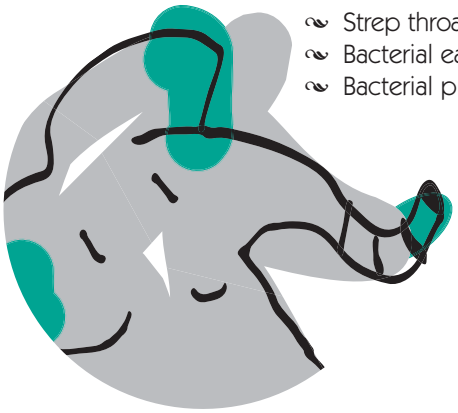
When handwashing is impossible, use disposable wet wipes with alcohol in them or alcohol- based hand gels.

Colds, those darn colds...

- Children can get 6 to 9 colds a year, more if they are in group childcare. Colds typically last 7-10 days but it is not unusual to for them to last up to 2 weeks.
- It is normal for mucus from the nose to get thick and change color during a cold. If mucus does turn from clear to a green or yellow color, it does not mean your child needs an antibiotic!

REACH Mass is Underway!

Remember...always use antibiotics wisely!



Antibiotics *do* work for bacterial infections like:

- Strep throat
- Bacterial ear and sinus infections
- Bacterial pneumonia

Antibiotics *do not* work for viral infections like:

- Colds and coughs, including bronchitis
- Sore throats due to colds, the flu or other viruses

Word Scramble

1) Most coughs are **lvria**.
2) A **prtes** throat is the only sore throat treated with **iotbacitsni**.
3) **Egenr** mucus during a cold does not require an antibiotic.
4) **Gahiwanhnds** is an effective way to stop the spread of germs.
5) Antibiotics can kill **atrcbiea**, not **uesvsir**.

Answers: 1) viral 2) strep,antibiotics 3) green 4) handwashing 5) bacteria,viruses