

Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotic drugs can save lives. But some germs get so strong that they can resist the drugs. This is called resistance. The drugs don't work as well. Germs can even pass on resistance to other germs.

Antibiotics normally work by killing germs called bacteria. Or they stop the bacteria from growing. But sometimes not all of them are stopped or killed. The strongest ones are left to grow and spread. A person can get sick again. This time the germs are harder to kill.

The more often a person uses an antibiotic, the more likely it is that the germs will resist it. This can make some diseases very hard to control. It can make you sick longer and require more doctor visits. You may need to take drugs that are even stronger.

Two main types of germs

Bacteria and viruses are the two main types of germs. They cause most illness. Antibiotics can kill bacteria, but they do not work against viruses.

Viruses cause:

- Colds
- Sore throats
- Bronchitis
- Ear infections
- Coughs
- Flu
- Sinus problems

Bacteria live in drinking water, food, and soil. They live in plants, animals, and people. Most of them do not hurt people. Some even help us to digest food. But other bacteria cause bad diseases like tuberculosis (TB) and lyme disease.

Does this affect me?

If you have a virus, taking antibiotics is not a good idea. Antibiotics don't work against viruses. The medicine will not help you. It might even harm you. Each time you take one, you add to the chances that bacteria in your body will be able to resist them. Later that could make you very sick. Finding the right treatment could be a problem.

What common mistakes do patients make?

- Patients ask for antibiotics they don't need. For example, they ask for antibiotics to treat a cold.
- They don't take antibiotics the way the doctor says. For example, they stop taking the drug before all the pills are used. That can leave the strongest germs to grow.
- They save antibiotics and take them on their own later.



Antibiotic Resistance

Why do doctors give antibiotics when these drugs are not needed?

- Doctors are not sure what is causing an illness.
- They are pressed for time.
- They give in to what patients ask for.

What is the FDA doing about the problem?

The FDA wants doctors to be more careful about giving antibiotics when they are not needed.

- The FDA will require new labeling for doctors.
- One of the new labels must say that these drugs should be used only for infections caused by bacteria.
- Another label will ask doctors to explain the right way to use the drugs to their patients.

What should I do?

- Don't demand an antibiotic when your doctor says you don't need it.
- Don't take an antibiotic for a virus (cold, cough, or flu).
- Take your medicine exactly the way the doctor says. Don't skip doses.
- Don't stop taking your medicine when you feel better. Take all the doses.
- Don't take leftover medicine.
- Don't take someone else's medicine.
- Don't rely on antibacterial products (soaps, detergents, and lotions). There is no proof that these products really help.

FDA Office of Women's Health <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

To Learn More:

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
<http://www.fda.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov>

Over-the-Counter Drugs

Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are drugs you can buy without a prescription.

It is very important to read the label when using OTC drugs. It is the only way to know how to use the drug the right way.

FDA passed a law about labels on OTC drugs. The law says that all OTC products must have a new label called “Drug Facts.” This label will show people the best, safest way to use OTC drugs.

How is the new label different?

- It will use common words that are easy to understand.
- The print will be bigger, making it easier to read.
- The label will look the same and be in the same place on every product.

What will be on the label?

- Active ingredients—What is in the product that makes it work.
- Purposes—What the drug is for.
- Uses—What problems it is used to treat.
- Warnings—Who should not take the product, problems to watch out for.
- Directions—How much to take, when to take it.
- Inactive Ingredients—What else is in the product. People can see if they are allergic to something in the product.

How will the new label help me?

- It will help you compare products and choose the best one for your illness.
- The product will work its best because you can use it the right way.
- You will have all the information you need to stay away from problems.



Over-the-Counter Drugs



FDA Office of Women's Health <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

To Learn More:

FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/otc/label/quesanswers.htm>

Phone: 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332)

Using Medicines Wisely

Today we have many medicines to choose from. Medicine can help you, but no drug is totally safe. There are things you can do to lower your chances of having problems and make sure your medicine works the best it can.

Ask questions

- Why am I using this medicine?
- How long should I use it?
- When should I start to feel better?
- What problems should I watch for?
- What should I do if I have problems or side effects?
- When should I use this medicine?
- Should I take it on an empty stomach or with food?
- Is it safe to drink alcohol with it?
- What should I do if I forget to use it?

Know the medicine

- What is the brand name? Does the drug have any other names?
- What does the drug look like? Look at the color, shape, and package. If it looks different next time, ask why. It could be the wrong medicine.

Read the label

- Find out what is in the drug. Do not use the medicine if you are allergic to anything in it. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about changing your medicine.
- Don't use two drugs with the same or similar ingredients.
- Don't use two drugs for the same problem unless your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist suggests it.
- Read the warnings carefully.

Follow directions

- Do not skip taking your medicines.
- Don't take more than the suggested dose.
- Do not share medicines.
- Do not take medicine in the dark. It's too easy to make a mistake.

Keep a list of all the medicines you use

- List all of your prescription medicines.
- List any over-the-counter medicines you use.
- List any vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids, and other products you use.
- Carry the list with you to show your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.



Using Medicines Wisely



How do you feel?

- If you are not feeling better, or start to feel worse, call your doctor or clinic. You might need a different medicine or a different dose.

For a free copy of a brochure with a place to list your medicines, call 1-888-878-3256.

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