what can i do to reduce antibiotic resistance?

1. If your doctor recommends that an antibiotic is not necessary then follow his or her advice.

Many people expect or demand antibiotics for colds or other infections, even though most are viral and their doctor recommends that antibiotics are not necessary. This leads to antibiotic overuse and resistance.

2. Do not stop taking an antibiotic simply because you feel better.

Sometimes when antibiotics are prescribed, people may not follow the directions and this can also lead to antibiotic resistance. It is very important to take the antibiotic for as long as your doctor has prescribed.

3. Do not share antibiotics and return unused antibiotics to your pharmacist for proper disposal.

People are sometimes tempted to use leftover antibiotics, or to share their prescription. What works for one person might not be the right choice for another person or it may cause a severe allergic reaction in someone. Sharing antibiotics can also promote antibiotic resistance.

conclusions

Antibiotic resistance is a serious problem. Correct use of antibiotics is the best way to ensure the long term effectiveness of these drugs in treating infections.

For more information about how to reduce antibiotic resistance, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

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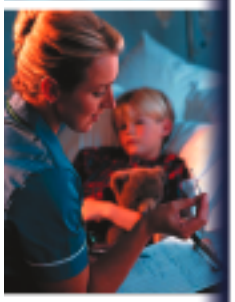


A Society Overdosing Itself on

Antibiotics - Who Really Needs Them?

Ontario Pharmacists' Association

introduction

Antibiotic resistance is a serious international public health issue. Media reports detail the rise of new "superbugs", and the return of old diseases like tuberculosis. This is cause for significant concern.

The rise of these infections is, in part, due to antibiotic resistance. This pamphlet explains what causes antibiotic resistance and what you can do to reduce it.

what are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are drugs used to kill or harm specific bacteria. For over 50 years antibiotics have been used to treat many infectious diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and meningitis.

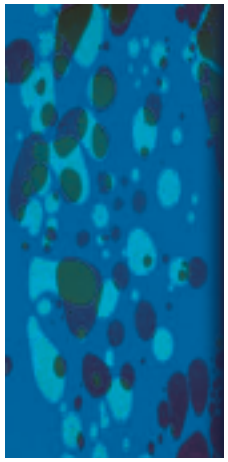
- Before the discovery of antibiotics, people died from bacterial infections that are easily treated today.

what are bacteria?

Bacteria are microscopic life forms that can cause infections in human beings and animals. Bacteria are able to adapt quickly to their surroundings, and will change to avoid being destroyed by antibiotic drugs.

- Bacteria are NOT the same as viruses.

what are viruses?



Like bacteria, viruses are also microscopic life forms which may also cause infections.

Most upper respiratory infections (common colds, flus and sore throats) are caused by viruses and should not be treated with antibiotics.

Using antibiotics to treat virus infections allows existing harmless bacteria to adapt, change and become resistant.

- Antibiotics DO NOT kill viruses.

what is antibiotic resistance?

When antibiotics are used incorrectly and too frequently, bacteria will adapt and change to prevent being destroyed. Once these bacteria change, the antibiotic is no longer useful. For example, the usefulness of penicillin, which was effective 50 years ago, is limited because of antibiotic resistance.

- The more often bacteria are exposed to antibiotics, the more likely they are to develop resistance.

- Not taking an antibiotic exactly as prescribed for a bacterial infection can allow the bacteria to develop resistance.

- Certain bacteria have now changed to the point where no antibiotic can stop them.

what are the results of antibiotic resistance?

The widespread overuse of antibiotics, means some bacteria are no longer affected by even the strongest antibiotics. Infections can be more severe, last longer, spread more quickly and even lead to death because there are no effective antibiotics available.

- Developing new antibiotics is a long and costly process.

- Bacteria can change much more quickly than we can develop new antibiotics.