

Insider Health Secrets

HOME

Antibiotics: Safe or Harmful?

During the winter season, people are often given antibiotics for their colds and flus. But colds, flus, cough and sinus congestion are symptoms of upper respiratory infections that are typically caused by viruses. However, antibiotics act only against bacteria and are **ineffective against viral infections**. Taking an antibiotic when you don't need it is not without risk. Antibiotics can drastically decrease the numbers of normal, protective intestinal flora normally present in the intestines – which can leave you too deficient – and cause an increased risk of getting even more infections.

A well known research study on antibiotics showed that taking even a single regimen of antibiotics (i.e. about 10 days) makes a person **3 to 4 times more likely to get another infection**. This is because antibiotics often kill off too much of the host's inherent beneficial flora (which may have already been deficient in the first place), leaving the host even more unprotected in the fight against new infectious agents.

Types of Infections.

Generally speaking, infections are typically caused by three different agents: viruses, bacteria and fungi:

Virus. Examples of viral infections include the flu (influenza), the common cold (adeno viruses) and AIDS.

Bacteria. Bacterial infections include strep throat, most bladder infections and ear infections in children. Although bacteria can be killed by antibiotics like penicillin and sulfa, antibiotics create **abnormal, cell-wall deficient bacterial forms which can embed deeper into your intestinal mucosa**. That is why taking antibiotics increases your susceptibility to future infections. With every dose of an antibiotic, you also increase the potential incidence of resistant, "super forms" of bacteria.

Fungus. Fungal infections include skin rashes like athlete's foot and a type of meningitis called cryptococcal meningitis. Antifungal drugs often have many negative side effects and are ineffective in those who already have a weakened immune system.

Antibiotics Are Not Harmless

According to recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, taking properly prescribed medical drugs was listed as the third leading cause of death in the U.S.,

presumably due to the extensive side effects of many drugs. Antibiotics were specifically listed as one of the drugs in this category. At times, antibiotics can be highly toxic and even deadly. Here are some of the potential adverse effects of taking antibiotics:

Allergic vs. toxic reactions. Many people wrongly believe they are allergic to certain antibiotics, such as penicillin, because it may give them an upset stomach or headache. In fact, some reactions to antibiotics are really toxic reactions whereby the body is reacting to the toxic nature of the antibiotic.

For example, one patient developed a severe reaction to sulfa drugs. Her entire skin blistered and sloughed off, and her vital organs began to shut down. She had been taking the antibiotic for a simple bladder infection, yet she died four days later.

Alteration of normal bacterial flora. Broad-spectrum antibiotics are indiscriminating: in addition to "bad bacteria", they also kill healthy bacteria which normally live in the intestines and the vagina, and which are a necessary part of the indigenous flora to keep the body healthy. Antibiotics alter the normal flora in the gastrointestinal system, killing off the bad as well as the good bacteria. This leaves the person without sufficient normal protective bacteria. This is why antibiotics can cause bouts of diarrhea.

If the flora is severely altered (in which too many beneficial bacteria die), it can even lead to **life-threatening colitis, a severe inflammation of the colon**. In some cases, young patients have required surgery after antibiotics because of development of colitis, after which they needed a colostomy bag.

In addition, antibiotics alter the normal vaginal flora and often bring about vaginal yeast infections. When the "good" bacteria are killed with antibiotics, then yeast, which is part of the normal flora of the body, can begin to overgrow because the antibiotics have altered the body's healthy terrain (internal ecological balance) allowing the yeast to hyperproliferate and cause many far-reaching, toxic symptoms.

Antibiotics do not kill yeast. Many women find after taking antibiotics, they get vaginal yeast infections (because their normal bacterial balance has been lost). Antibiotics can also bring about fungal skin infections for the same reasons. Sometimes these skin infections are difficult to clear.

Creation of super-strain resistant bacteria. Bacteria often become resistant when they are repeatedly exposed to antibiotics. The genetic makeup of the bacteria changes, which can make infections extremely difficult to treat. Some doctors consider antibiotics, like penicillin and amoxicillin, to be harmless and they often prescribe them even for relatively minor infections.

However, we now know that frequent antibiotic use can cause a long-lasting upset in the body's normal healthy bacterial ecology. For example, super-resistant staph infections and others have become so resistant mostly because of the frequent, repeated use of antibiotics.

Interference with vitamins and minerals. Antibiotics can interfere with the absorption of many vitamins and minerals, leading to deficiencies in vitamins and minerals. Deficiencies in these nutrients can set the stage for increased susceptibility to more infections.

Interference with other medications. Antibiotics can abnormally alter the way other medical drugs are metabolized.

A Different Approach

For centuries in many different cultures all around the world, even serious infections have been effectively and safely cleared with the use of natural herbal agents. The function and use of these herbs has been handed down from generation to generation for the health and well being of the families and cultures.

Natural Anti-Infective Agents. Unlike antibiotics, natural anti-infective botanical agents, such as **olive leaf extract, hyssop, garlic** and many others, can effectively kill the offending infectious bacteria **without altering the body's own normal healthy flora** or compromising the body's intestinal tract or other organs and glands.

Olive Leaf Extract. Also, unlike antibiotics, many herbal agents such as **Italian olive leaf extract** can effectively **eliminate viruses** from the body, including the AIDS virus. This powerful, broad-spectrum herbal remedy has been used for centuries, is readily available, highly effective and is a very reasonable cost. Unlike antibiotics, Italian olive leaf extract has no harmful side effects.

Probiotic Complexes. During times when the body's immune system is under attack and an infection is trying to gain hold such as a cold or flu, taking several capsules of a natural **probiotic complex** can be a tremendous help in replacing greater amounts of beneficial bacteria in the intestines to help the immune system fight off the invaders and most efficiently eliminate them. The effects can often be felt almost immediately. If a cold or flu is already underway, taking probiotics can tremendously shorten the recuperation time. They are also an excellent infection preventative agent when taken daily.