

Antibiotics: Not Always the Best Medicine

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Antibiotics are strong medicines used to treat infections caused by bacteria. They have saved countless lives. But researchers say overuse of antibiotics has helped to create bacteria that resist antibiotics. This problem is making bacterial illnesses, such as malaria and pneumonia, difficult to treat.

Bacteria and Viruses

Antibiotics kill most bacteria, but leave behind a few that can resist it. Each time you take antibiotics, you increase the chance that you may later become ill from the resistant bacteria.

Researchers say that it is normal for these bacteria to develop, but they have become too common too quickly. One reason is the poor use of antibiotics.

For example: antibiotics cannot cure viruses. In general, viruses cause colds, the flu, coughs, bronchitis, and sinusitis. Rest, plenty of fluid, and time are often the best medicine for these conditions.

What you can do

To help make sure that antibiotics keep fighting bacterial infection.

- Try not to pressure your doctor to prescribe antibiotics. Be prepared to wait out some infections.
- Follow the medicine's directions.



- Finish the medicine. Many people stop taking their medicine too soon when they begin to feel better.
- Never save or share unused antibiotics. One study found that parents often give their children antibiotics without their doctor's knowledge, using leftover medication.

Here are some more ways to prevent an infection:

- Wash your hands often. Hand washing can prevent the spread of infection.
- Exercise, eat right, and get plenty of sleep. Healthy living helps the body fight infections without drugs.

Pets May Enhance Mental—and Physical—Well-Being

If you have a pet, you probably already know that animal companions can lift your mood. But did you know that they might even boost your physical health? consider these findings:

- Dog owners were less likely than non-dog owners to die within the first year after a heart attack.
- One study measured the negative physical effects of stress in women who owned dogs. They were

tested alone, while accompanied by a friend, or while accompanied by their dog. Those with their dog at their side fared best.

- Among older adults, physical health was less likely to decline over the course of a year in pet owners than in non-pet owners. to evaluate physical health, researchers used a scale that measured the ability to perform activities of daily living.



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