

“Sometimes the **RIGHT PRESCRIPTION** is **NO PRESCRIPTION.**”

ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. WHAT CAUSES INFECTIONS?

Infections can be caused by many kinds of germs, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi. Even though they cannot be seen, these microbes are all around us.

2. WHAT ARE ANTIBIOTICS?

Antibiotics are medications that work to kill or stop bacteria from multiplying.

Antibiotics do not work against infections caused by viruses. MOST colds, sore throats and flu are caused by viruses.

3. WHAT IS ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE?

Antibiotic resistance happens when bacteria that can make you sick change so that the antibiotics used to treat them do not work as well or at all. One of the most common antibiotic-resistant bacteria is methicillin-resistant *staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), commonly found on the skin.

4. WHAT CAUSES ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE?

Antibiotic resistance develops naturally, but the main causes are the overuse and misuse of antibiotics. This includes using antibiotics when they are not needed, not taking antibiotics as prescribed, self-medicating or antibiotic sharing.

“ANTIBIOTICS DO **NOT WORK** AGAINST INFECTIONS CAUSED BY VIRUSES...”

5. WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

We rely on antibiotics to cure bacterial infections. Before antibiotics were discovered in 1928, infections such as bacterial pneumonia and infections associated with childbirth or minor wounds could not be treated and often caused death.

Resistant infections are more difficult to treat, and can lead to long-term illness, and even death.

6. WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Anyone can get an antibiotic-resistant infection. However, young children, the elderly, people with weakened immune systems (HIV, cancer, diabetes) are most at risk.

7. HOW CAN I PROTECT MY FAMILY FROM THE RISKS OF INFECTION?

Steps to avoid getting an infection or spreading an infection to someone else:

- **Keep your hands clean** by using plain soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand rub/cleanser.
- **Clean your hands** especially after using the toilet.
- If you vomit or have diarrhea, **clean your washroom thoroughly**, and clean your hands.
- **Keep your hands away from your eyes**, nose and mouth because this is where germs can get into the body.
- Cough or **sneeze into your sleeve** or tissue instead of your hand.
- Store, handle and prepare food safely to **avoid food-related** illness.
- Practice **safer sex** to avoid sexually transmitted infections.
- Keep your **vaccinations up to date**.
- Speak to your elder to find ways to **increase your immune system**, if required.

“**ANYONE CAN GET AN ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT INFECTION.**”

If you are prescribed antibiotics, use them exactly how you were told.

- Even if you start feeling better or stop having symptoms, continue with your antibiotics as prescribed until finished.
- If you experience a reaction or side effects, contact your healthcare professional.
- If you are told to stop taking the antibiotics, don't store unused medicine or flush it down the toilet. Return any unused medication to the nursing station, the health centre in your community, or a pharmacy near you.
- **AVOID** the following:
 - » sharing your antibiotics with anyone;
 - » taking antibiotics from someone else; or
 - » using leftover antibiotics from previous prescriptions.
- Sometimes the **RIGHT PRESCRIPTION** is **NO PRESCRIPTION**.

Remember that just because you are sick, it does not mean you need antibiotics.

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