

# **Are You Taking Antibiotics For No Reason?**

by Lisa Richards

We are so fortunate to live in a time when healthcare is advancing so quickly. Treatments for diseases like cancer and diabetes are progressing on almost a daily basis, and we are more likely than ever before to recover from serious illnesses.

However, there are some areas in which medicine has taken a backward step over the past few decades. One of these areas is antibiotics. Originally thought to be miracle drugs, antibiotics have increasingly been exposed as overused, often unnecessary, and in many cases harmful.

There are two problems with taking antibiotics needlessly. First, they have potentially serious consequences for your immune system and general health. Antibiotics can destroy the communities of 'good bacteria' that play a huge role in your health, and can allow pathogens like Candida to dominate your gut. Second, using antibiotics unnecessarily can lead to the development of drug-resistant diseases.

## **Why are antibiotics overprescribed?**

The main reason that antibiotics are overused is simple. People ask for them when they're sick, and their doctors give them a prescription. Antibiotics are only really useful for bacterial infections, but many people with a simple cold virus will request them.

Your doctor may also prescribe antibiotics 'just in case'. This is particularly true of older doctors who haven't kept up with the latest research on the importance of gut bacteria. He or she might notice that your cold symptoms are particularly severe, or may even find some signs of a throat infection. Even though these symptoms are highly likely to clear up with some rest and lots of liquids, you might get a prescription for antibiotics.

One of the results of this chronic over-prescription is that some diseases have started to develop resistance to antibiotics. That's why everyone should take the time to understand the proper use of antibiotics. A recent survey by the WHO showed that 64% of people believed that antibiotics could treat the flu or colds. Taking responsibility for your own health, and spending the time to understand these concepts,

## **Antibiotics can cause long term health problems**

There is another, very significant, reason why you should be careful with your use of antibiotics. They can be extremely damaging to your digestion, immune system and your long term health.

The problem with most broad spectrum antibiotics is that they indiscriminately attack bacteria throughout your body. This used to be thought of as a good thing! After all, who wants a bunch of bacteria causing trouble in your gut and elsewhere? However, research now conclusively shows that these bacteria are actually crucial to the healthy functioning of your body.

The so called 'good bacteria' in your gut perform a number of roles. They keep your immune system active and ready to fight pathogens like Candida; they help you to extract nutrients from food; they assist in maintaining the correct acidity in your gut; and much more. When you take antibiotics, there is an excellent chance that you will destroy many of these beneficial bacteria in your gut. The immediate consequences often include diarrhea and headaches, but the longer-term consequences are more severe. If an opportunistic pathogen like Candida takes the place of those good bacteria, the balance of your gut flora will change significantly. This can lead to problems including a weakened immune system, an impaired inability to extract nutrients from food, poor digestion, and imbalanced acidity in your stomach and intestines.

### **Think carefully before taking antibiotics**

Do you really need that course of antibiotics? Would your cold or infection disappear after a few days of rest and lots of liquids? Don't forget that taking antibiotics is not a 'free' choice. There can be significant costs involved to your long term health. So think very carefully before you ask your doctor for antibiotics, and question him or her thoroughly about their necessity.

The saddest thing is when you hear of children who have taken multiple courses of antibiotics before they even hit five years old. In fact, the average American child receives three courses of antibiotics before reaching two years old. Many times, these antibiotics have been prescribed for fevers or ear infections that would have cleared up by themselves. Most parents don't realize that taking antibiotics for one infection will make it *more likely* that their child gets another infection. This vicious cycle (antibiotics >> infection >> antibiotics >> infection) can continue for years.

Sometimes of course, antibiotics are absolutely necessary. If you find that you have to take them, then there is very simple thing that you can do to reduce their effects on your health.

Find a good probiotic (one with a high CFU and multiple strains), and take it during your treatment. After you have finished the antibiotics, continue to take it for at least two months. This will help to maintain a healthy balance of bacteria in your intestines, and support your immune system in the long term.

<http://www.thecandidadiet.com/are-you-taking-antibiotics-for-no-reason>