



WHEN TO BE ANTI-ANTIBIOTIC!

I recently read an article written by John Swartzberg M.D. that provided some interesting insight into the use of antibiotics in this country. Because this is the season for colds, influenza and sore throats, I thought the information was worth sharing.

There was a recent report published in JAMA Internal Medicine by two Harvard researchers that looked at data representing 92 million American adults treated for sore throat between 1996 and 2010. The researchers estimated that 10% had a sore throat due to “strep”, the only common cause that requires antibiotics . . . but 60% with sore throats were prescribed antibiotics.

The CDC estimates that up to half of the antibiotic use in Americans is “unnecessary and inappropriate”. The report also found that expensive broad-spectrum antibiotics were increasingly prescribed rather than penicillin which is recommended by medical guidelines for treating strep throat because it is effective and inexpensive.

Overuse of antibiotics is a problem because antibiotics can have adverse effects like diarrhea, but more important is the fact that overuse contributes to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Dr. Swartzberg stated that, “antibiotics are a limited resource – the more they are used today, the less likely they will be effective in the future”.

If testing confirms that you have strep throat, which is often accompanied by a fever, antibiotics should be ordered. If you have a runny nose, cough, hoarseness or mouth sores, it’s probably a cold or the flu. **IF** you develop a bacterial complication (bronchitis or an ear or sinus infection), you’ll need antibiotics.

Why do doctors prescribe antibiotics so often? Some just write out the prescription to be on the safe side” but probably more often, it’s patients that ask for the prescription. Seems patients are happier and feel better taking a pill than being told to just take it easy, rest and drink plenty of fluids.

The bottom line is unless you have strep throat . . . you’ll be better off not taking the antibiotics. You’ll get better just as fast!



Dwindling Antibiotic Development

