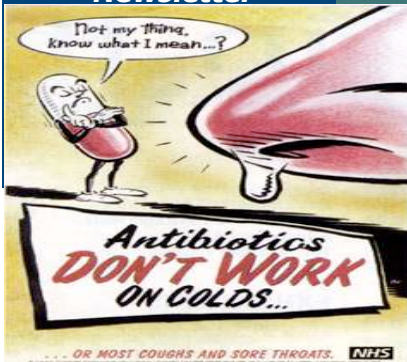


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Newsletter



Are You Overusing Antibiotics?

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For the past couple of months, the theme around town seems to be strep throat, sinus infections, ear infections, bronchial infections, colds, etc. When I hear these diagnoses used in my office, they are commonly followed by, "I'm on antibiotics." Hearing these words makes me cringe. Do you know what you are doing to your body when you take an antibiotic? Have you given any thought as to how an antibiotic works and when you should and shouldn't jump on the antibiotic bandwagon? If not, let me guide you!

What is an antibiotic and how do they work?

The word antibiotic comes from the Greek language where anti means 'against' and bios means 'life.' Antibiotics are drugs that were created to kill bacteria. Naturally, there are billions of bacteria that line and live within the human digestive and respiratory tract and skin. These bacteria create balance to sustain life, without them we would not survive. Think of it as a mini-ecosystem within your body.

When prescribed an antibiotic by your medical doctor for whatever symptom you are experiencing, you are most likely thinking, "Oh good, now I will be healed." Little did you know that you are actually wiping out the entire population of bacteria in your digestive and respiratory tract despite whether they are causing trouble or not. Antibiotics are not specific to the bacteria they kill; they kill all bacteria. So now that you have wiped out all of the bacteria in your system, you are left with a weakened immune system, diarrhea, vomiting, itching and skin rash, breathing difficulties, and most likely a lovely yeast infection... but hey, your symptoms are gone. All of these new symptoms are telling you that you just destroyed the mini-ecosystem within your body that keeps you alive and healthy.

You will commonly hear people refer to the bacteria that live in the digestive and respiratory tracts as the "good bacteria or friendly bacteria." Then, when someone is said to have an "infection" you hear the word "bad bacteria." This is where the misconception is; for the most part the "bad" bacteria you hear about are the same as the "good", just the "bad" have become out of balance and created symptoms and a reaction from the immune system. For example, when you are said to have strep throat, this means that a doctor has swabbed the back of your throat and counted the number of strep bacterium found on the sample. If the count is higher than what is deemed "normal", then you are said to have strep and are traditionally put on an antibiotic. What most people do not know is that Streptococci are part of the normal commensal flora of the human mouth, skin, intestines, and upper respiratory tract. Meaning, if you were to swab your mouth right now and look at it under a microscope, you would see strep bacteria! Is this a reason to panic? Of course not, so why panic when you have symptoms of strep throat? The symptoms are telling you that the mini-ecosystem within your body has become out of balance. Therefore, it's time to take care of yourself by getting adjusted (of course), getting rest, eliminating sugar and bread, increasing your fruits and veggies and water, and allowing your immune system to re-establish balance among the billions of bacteria. Your body is equipped with its own "antibiotics", which are the white blood cells. These cells are very smart and can create a specific antibody to any bacteria or virus it deems harmful. When given the proper nutrition and rest, the human body can restore balance within a matter of days without any need for outside drugs. Once your body has re-established balance on its own, your immune system becomes even stronger.

So, you can see why the thought of taking an antibiotic for a common bacterial infection makes me cringe. But what drives me crazy is to hear that someone is on an antibiotic for the cold or flu! To simplify this, when you have a cold, the flu, most sinus infections, and most bronchial infection, you have a virus. Antibiotics do not kill viruses!!! So, if you are taking an antibiotic for your virus you are wiping out your entire bacterial population for absolutely no reason at all. You may feel a bit better temporarily due to the anti-inflammatory properties of the antibiotic, and then you will most likely experience your virus with a vengeance due to your destroyed immune system.

This is a topic I can go on and on about, but for sake of not boring you I will end this here. Please think before you fill that prescription for your antibiotic! Keep in mind that you are not only killing all the bacteria that work so hard to keep you healthy, but you are also setting yourself and others up for "super-bugs", mutated bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics. In an emergency situation you want the antibiotics to work, and with everyone jumping on the antibiotic bandwagon and taking them for every sniffle, sore throat, and sneeze, you may find yourself in serious trouble when you actually need that antibiotic! For further questions please feel free to call the office, write an email, or come in for an appointment!

Let's Get Back To Natural Health!!