

2005

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The Doctor Is In

By Laura Boudreaux, M.D.

The Truth About Antibiotics

A common misconception among parents today is that antibiotics will cure any ailment that plagues their child. Pediatricians are faced daily with the decision of whether or not antibiotics are indicated.

To start, a parent must first understand that antibiotics are medicines used to treat specific bacterial infections, such as strep throat or a urinary tract infection. They are only useful to treat bacterial infections and will not provide any benefit in viral infections, such as most colds and the flu. Some viruses get better without any medications.

When used inappropriately, antibiotics can cause harm by creating resistant bacteria. These are bacteria that are no longer killed by common antibiotics. There are already a few bacterial infections that are resistant to many antibiotics and are untreatable. This is an area of growing concern among doctors today. Antibiotics can also cause undesirable side effects such as stomach upset and diarrhea.

There are a few helpful tips to remember when your child is prescribed an antibiotic. Always finish the doses prescribed by your pediatrician. Do not stop them early even if your child is feeling better. Also, do not share your child's antibiotics with a sibling or friend. Finally, discard any unused or expired antibiotics.

In summary, antibiotics aren't always the answer when your child is sick. Always ask your child's doctor what the best treatment is for your child.



Laura Boudreaux, M.D.



Greg Gelpi, M.D.



Dawn Vick, M.D.



George J. Schwartzberg, M.D.



Stephanie Kelleher, M.D.

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(225) 926-4400

