Use antibiotics wisely. Talk with your healthcare provider about the right medicines for your health.

For more information, please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at:

www.cdc.gov/getsmart

or call:

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

ANTIBIOTICS: What You Need to Know

Protect Yourself. Protect Others.

The way you use antibiotics today directly impacts how effective they will be in the future. Antibiotic resistance is not just a problem for the person with the infection. Some resistant bacteria can spread to others—promoting antibiotic-resistant infections.

It may be many years before new antibiotics are available to effectively treat more resistant infections. To help prevent the development of resistant bacteria, we need to improve the use of antibiotics that are currently available. Using antibiotics as prescribed is the best way to preserve their strength against future bacterial illnesses.

- Do NOT share your antibiotics with others.
- Do NOT take antibiotics prescribed to someone else.
- Do NOT keep unused antibiotics for future use. (Ask your pharmacist how to properly dispose of any leftover antibiotics).
The Basics

Most illnesses are caused by bacteria or viruses. Antibiotics can only cure bacterial infections, NOT viral infections.

The use of antibiotics, like most prescription drugs, comes with some risks. Antibiotics can:

• Kill good bacteria in your body, which may cause diarrhea or yeast infections.
• Cause a serious allergic reaction that may require hospitalization.
• Result in the bacteria developing a resistance to the antibiotic.

Be sure to talk to your doctor or pharmacist about potential side effects of any prescribed antibiotics.

Did You Know?

• Antibiotics can cause allergic reactions and unwanted side effects. Harmful effects from antibiotics cause 1 in 5 emergency room visits.
• Antibiotics can be overused and misused. It is estimated that more than half of antibiotics are unnecessarily prescribed to children for cough and cold illnesses, most of which are caused by viruses. Remember, antibiotics can only cure infections caused by bacteria, NOT viruses.

Do NOT use antibiotics for a viral infection. They will:

• NOT cure the infection
• NOT help you feel better
• NOT prevent others from catching your illness

Harmful effects from the use of antibiotics are the most common cause of emergency room visits for children under 18.

What Should You Do?

• Ask about symptom relief. Antibiotics are not always the answer to feeling better. You should never pressure your doctor for antibiotics. Instead ask for the best treatment for your illness. Talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist about how to relieve symptoms.

• Ask if watchful waiting is right for you. Waiting a few days to see if you get better before deciding to prescribe antibiotics may be recommended by your healthcare professional. This is because some infections, like mild sinus and ear infections, can get better without antibiotics.

• Antibiotic resistance is growing. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics cause antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance results in bacteria that no longer respond to the drugs designed to kill them. Resistant bacteria are more difficult to treat and destroy.

An estimated 2 million illnesses and 23,000 deaths occur each year in the United States due to antibiotic-resistant infections.

• Green colored mucus is NOT a sign that an antibiotic is needed. As the body’s immune system fights off an infection, mucus can change color. Change in mucus color alone does not mean that antibiotics are needed. Any treatment should be discussed with your healthcare professional.