

Food choices can affect antibiotic's effectiveness

November 19 2010, By Julie Deardorff

When your child needs antibiotics, dietary choices can get complicated. Food can help support the body nutritionally and hinder the effectiveness of the medication, depending on what your child eats and when.

Antibiotics kill the nasty bacteria that cause the illness but also can wipe out the beneficial microbes that the body needs to absorb key nutrients, including several B vitamins and [vitamin K](#).

Experts say it's important to replace the lost nutrients, either through a multivitamin or by eating foods rich in the depleted vitamins, such as leafy green veggies. At the same time, food and supplements can increase, reduce or delay how a drug is absorbed.

To get the most out of the medicine, make sure your child takes the full dosage and read the package insert. Always check with your pharmacist for each specific medication.

Also: Make sure she really needs antibiotics. Antibiotics cure bacterial infections - which means they are useless against [viral infections](#) such as colds or flu, most coughs, bronchitis, runny noses and sore throats not caused by strep.

Here are some tips to ensure a child's diet is optimizing the recovery process:

Try probiotics. Some strains of bacteria, known as probiotics, have been shown to help avoid or treat diarrhea caused by antibiotics. The so-called healthy bacteria can be found in certain yogurts, miso and other fermented foods, and are available as powders and pills. Look for the "live" strains Lactobacillus GG and the yeast Saccharomyces boulardii.

Watch the calcium and iron. Don't give your child antibiotics with calcium- or iron-rich foods such as milk, hot dogs or iron-fortified cereal. Calcium and iron can interfere with the body's ability to absorb certain kinds of antibiotics known as quinolones, said Katrina Seidman, a registered dietitian at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Time it right. If your child eats food with calcium or iron, or took a children's multivitamin, wait three hours before giving the antibiotic so the body will absorb more of the medicine, Seidman said.

Eat soup. Nutrient-dense soups or broths, which supply antioxidants and phytochemicals, are the No. 1 food to eat while on [antibiotics](#), said Dr. Ingrid Kohlstadt, editor of the textbook "Food and Nutrients in Disease Management."

Go low-acid. Acidic foods such as citrus juice, carbonated beverages, chocolate, antacids and tomato-based products such as ketchup can all interfere with drug absorption. Have your child avoid these several hours before and after taking the medication, said Seidman.

With the exception of yogurt, avoid dairy, said Kohlstadt. "The gastrointestinal barrier and the gut immune system undergo several changes from both the antibiotic and the infection," she said. "If you do eat dairy, make it yogurt low in sugar and lots of active cultures. Choose rice and oats over wheat."

Try sauerkraut or kimchee. "Cabbage prepared in its fermented form is a prebiotic, which helps the good bacteria return," said Kohlstadt. "It is also rich in absorbable glutamine, an amino acid which nourishes the small intestine."

Eat pumpkin seeds. "They're rich in zinc, and zinc shortens the duration of most cold viruses," said pharmacist Suzy Cohen, author of "Drug Muggers" (Truth Publishing, \$29.95).

(c) 2010, Chicago Tribune.

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Citation: Food choices can affect antibiotic's effectiveness (2010, November 19) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-11-food-choices-affect-antibiotic-effectiveness.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--