

Drug-resistant infections: A new epidemic, and what you can do to help

November 10 2011, by Rachel Champeau

(Medical Xpress)—Are you aware that colds, flu, most sore throats and bronchitis are caused by viruses? Did you know that antibiotics do not help fight viruses and that using them for viral infections only decreases their effectiveness overall?

Millions of Americans take antibiotics each year to fight illness, trusting they'll work. However, the pathogens are fighting back. Within the past couple of years, new drug-resistant patterns have emerged, and resistance to common antibiotics has increased.

"We can help this serious emerging problem by educating patients and health care workers about the proper use of antibiotics," said Dr. Daniel Uslan, assistant clinical professor of infectious diseases and director of the UCLA Antimicrobial Stewardship Program, which promotes the appropriate use of antibiotics for hospitals in the UCLA Health System.

In partnership with the Centers for Disease Control's Get Smart about Antibiotics Week, taking place Nov. 14–20, Uslan and his team will offer a continuing medical education program for health care providers and staff. Topics will include the prompt diagnosis and treatment of infections, the appropriate prescribing of antibiotics, and following infection-prevention techniques to prevent the spread of drug-resistant infections in hospitals.

According to Uslan, the public can also play a role in reducing the threat of antibiotic resistance, and he suggests the following:

- 1) If you are seeing your doctor for a cold or flu, discuss the use of antibiotics with your physician. If it's a viral infection, antibiotics aren't effective and will only add to the problem of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics are appropriately prescribed for only bacterial infections.
- 2) If your doctor determines that you do not have a bacterial infection, do not pressure your doctor to prescribe antibiotics. Instead, ask about methods you can use to reduce your symptoms.
- 3) Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed by your physician, even if you feel better.
- 4) Do not save leftover antibiotics for the next time you become sick.
- 5) Do not take antibiotics prescribed for someone else.
- 6) Do not assume that yellow or green mucus means that you need antibiotics. It is normal for mucus to get thick and change color during a viral cold.
- 7) The vast majority of sore throats do not require antibiotics. Only 5 percent to 15 percent of adult cases of sore throat are due to "strep." If your doctor suspects strep throat, ask whether a throat swab is appropriate.

More information: The following websites can help you stay informed:

UCLA Antimicrobial Stewardship Program

www.asp.mednet.ucla.edu/pages

Centers for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/index.html

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

Citation: Drug-resistant infections: A new epidemic, and what you can do to help (2011, November 10) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-11-drug-resistant-infections-epidemic.html>

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.