

# Are you overdoing antibiotics?

December 27 2018, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter

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(HealthDay)—Antibiotics are life-savers. But they're being overprescribed and overused, leading to antibiotic-resistant germs stronger than the drugs available to treat them.

This is also creating more drug side effects, allergic reactions and serious infections.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in one year alone, more than 262 million courses of antibiotics were prescribed on an outpatient basis—that's 842 prescriptions for every 1,000 adults. For children up to age 9 and adults 65 and older, the rate was greater than one to one, meaning that many took more than one prescription over the course of a year.

Urgent care centers, in particular, are prescribing antibiotics to walk-in patients at a very high rate, often because patients are demanding them, even when they're not necessary.

As a consequence, people are experiencing a growing number of infections caused by bacteria resistant to various antibiotics. These include MRSA, E. coli and strains of pneumonia.

#### Antibiotics Overuse 411:

- The most commonly prescribed antibiotic among children and teens is amoxicillin; among adults, it's azithromycin.
- Women are almost twice as likely as men to receive antibiotics.
- Antibiotic prescribing rates are higher in the South than other parts of the United States.
- Dermatologists, family practitioners and pediatricians prescribe more antibiotics than other types of doctors.

Sometimes you do need an antibiotic, but other times you don't.

Follow these [best practices](#) to avoid [antibiotic resistance](#):

- If you get sick, ask your doctor what tests you can have to make

sure the right antibiotic is prescribed, should you need one.

- Take antibiotics exactly as your doctor prescribes—complete the course of treatment, even after you start feeling better.
- Only take antibiotics prescribed for you. Don't share antibiotics—if you take the wrong medicine, you may not treat the problem correctly and allow bacteria to multiply.
- Don't "save" antibiotics for a future illness.
- Don't ask for antibiotics when your doctor thinks you don't need them.
- Prevent infections with thorough hand washing and getting all recommended vaccines.

Take steps to limit your exposure to [antibiotics](#) so that they'll work for you when you really need them.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has detailed information on [antibiotic resistance](#) to help you stay safe.

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Citation: Are you overdoing antibiotics? (2018, December 27) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-12-antibiotics.html>

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