

Antibiotics

Information for patients and carers

Pharmacy Department
Diagnostics, Therapeutics & Central Operations

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about antibiotics and to answer some common queries that you may have about these medicines.



Information for patients and visitors

Introduction - What are antibiotics used for?

Antibiotics are prescribed either to treat infections caused by bacteria or occasionally, to prevent such infections. Different types of antibiotics are used to treat different kinds of infection. In the UK, most antibiotics are only available on prescription.

How the medicine works

Antibiotics work by either killing the bacteria, or stopping them from increasing in number. They don't work against infections caused by viruses such as common colds, flu, most coughs or sore throats.

Benefits

When prescribed and taken correctly, antibiotics will help to treat and shorten the duration of bacterial infections.

Risks

Misuse of antibiotics causes bacteria to become resistant to antibiotic treatments meaning that, if you need antibiotics in the future, they may not work.

Misuse may also cause healthcare acquired infections, such as Clostridium difficile or Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

How and when to take antibiotics

Antibiotics are given for a specific period of time - often five days - and you will need to take them at regular, specified intervals during the day (it is not necessary to wake up especially to take them during the night).

Always take them as directed by your Doctor and do not stop taking them early, even if your symptoms improve. Bacteria can still

be in the body even when you are feeling better, so it is important to finish the full course of antibiotics. This will make it less likely for the infection to return.

Many antibiotics cannot be taken with certain foods or drinks because they make the antibiotic less effective, reducing the chances of a full recovery. Refer to the leaflet which comes with your prescription for further information or ask your pharmacist or doctor.

Possible side effects of antibiotics

Side effects are mostly mild and temporary unwanted effects of a successful treatment. The most common side effects of antibiotics are diarrhoea, feeling sick and vomiting. After treatment with certain antibiotics, you might get a fungal infection such as thrush.

Allergic reactions

Most antibiotic reactions are side effects, rather than true allergies, e.g. nausea, or diarrhoea.

Unlike allergies, side effects do not prevent you from having the antibiotic again in the future.

If you are allergic to antibiotics, you may get symptoms such as a rash and itching or, in severe cases, difficulty breathing. If you experience difficulty breathing, you should ring for an ambulance straight away.

If you think you have had an allergic reaction to an antibiotic before, always tell your Doctor or Pharmacist before treatment.

Interactions with other medicines

Medicines can affect or be affected by other medicines or herbal remedies. Check with your Doctor or Pharmacist about drug interactions if you have any concerns.



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Information for patients and visitors

Other Information

Do not take medicines prescribed for another person or give yours to friends, family or pets and do not keep left-over antibiotics. If your pack contains more doses than your course requires, ask your Pharmacist about how to dispose of the remainder. Please return any unused medicines that are no longer needed to any Pharmacy for safe disposal.

Speak to your Doctor before taking an antibiotic if you know you have any liver or kidney problems.

Tell your Doctor or Pharmacist if you are or are planning to become pregnant or plan to breast feed before taking any antibiotic.

Further information

If you have any questions about your medicines please do not hesitate to contact your Doctor, Pharmacist or Nurse.

If you feel that any problems you are having are possibly caused by your medicines, inform your Doctor or Pharmacist as soon as possible.

Please return any unused medicines that are no longer needed to any Pharmacy for safe disposal.

A leaflet which explains your medicine can be found within most medicine packets. We also recommend the following websites for further information on your medicines:

www.medicines.org.uk/guides

www.nhs.uk

Reference section

University Hospitals of Leicester; Antibiotics in Adult Patients leaflet, edition 1, June 2012.

University College London Hospitals; Antibiotics, Information for Patients and Visitors leaflet, June 2011.

Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:

nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net



Information for patients and visitors

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