



Information You Should Know About Antibiotics

What are Antibiotics?

Antibiotics are medicines used to treat infections or diseases caused by bacteria. Antibiotics are used for a range of infections caused by bacteria, including urinary tract infections, skin infections and infected wounds.

How Do Antibiotics Work?

Antibiotics work by blocking vital processes in bacteria, or stopping them from multiplying. This assists the body's natural immune system to fight the bacterial infection. Antibiotics differ in the types of bacteria they work against. Antibiotics that affect a wide range of bacteria are called broad spectrum antibiotics (e.g. Amoxicillin and Gentamycin).

Antibiotics that affect only a few types of bacteria are called narrow spectrum antibiotics (e.g. Penicillin). Dentists choose antibiotics according to the bacteria that usually causes a particular infection.

What are the Side Effects of Antibiotics?

Like all medicines antibiotics have the potential to cause side effects, most commonly, stomach or gastro-intestinal upsets.

Ask your dentist or pharmacist about the possible side effects of your medicine.

Allergic Reactions

Some antibiotics (e.g. Penicillin or a related antibiotic such as Amoxicillin) can cause allergic or hypersensitivity reactions such as hives (large, red, raised areas on the skin).

Very rarely a person may experience a severe or immediate allergic reaction to the antibiotic (anaphylaxis).

Who Can I Ask About Side Effects?

If you are concerned that you or someone in your care may have had a side effect related to a medicine, seek medical advice from your General Practitioner and inform your dentist of the side effect.

People with questions about their medicines or seeking general information about the side effects can also call the NPS Medicines line on:

1300 633 424 **Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm AEST**

Antibiotic Resistance

While not a direct side effect of antibiotics, antibiotic resistance can be another unintended effect of taking antibiotics.

If you take antibiotics when you don't need one, or you don't take the antibiotic as prescribed by your doctor or dentist, this can lead to antibiotic resistance.

To find out more about antibiotic resistance please see:

NPS Medicines line <http://www.nps.org.au/contact-us/medicines-line> Understanding the side effects of your medicine

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as: audio tape, computer disc or Braille on request.

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