

MATTERS

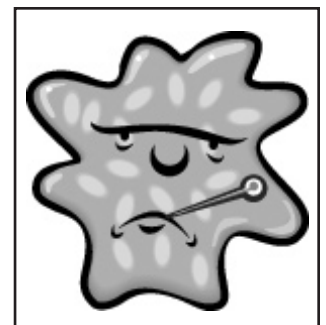
For Your Health: Facts About Antibiotic Resistance

Disease-causing microbes that have become resistant to drug therapy are an increasing public health problem. Tuberculosis, gonorrhea, malaria, and childhood ear infections are just a few of the diseases that have become hard to treat with antibiotic drugs.

Other facts:

- Though food-producing animals are given antibiotic drugs for important therapeutic, disease prevention or production reasons, these drugs can cause microbes to become resistant to drugs used to treat human illness, ultimately making some human sicknesses harder to treat.
- About 70% of bacteria that cause infections in hospitals are resistant to at least one of the drugs most commonly used to treat infections.
- Some organisms are resistant to all approved antibiotics and must be treated with experimental and potentially toxic drugs.

- Some research has shown that antibiotics are given to patients more often than guidelines set by federal and other healthcare organizations recommend.



- For example, patients sometimes ask their doctors for antibiotics for a cold, cough, or the flu, all of which are viral and don't respond to antibiotics. Also, patients who are prescribed antibiotics but don't take the full dosing regimen can contribute to resistance.
- Unless antibiotic resistance problems are detected as they emerge, and actions are taken to contain them, the world could be faced with previously treatable diseases that have again become untreatable, as in the days before antibiotics were developed.

Antibiotics Aren't Always the Answer

Most illnesses are caused by two kinds of germs: bacteria and viruses. Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections—not viral infections. **Bacteria** cause strep throat, some pneumonia and sinus infections—antibiotics *can* work on these conditions. **Viruses** cause the common cold, most coughs and the flu—antibiotics *don't* work on these.

Using antibiotics for a virus:

- **Will NOT cure the infection.**
- **Will NOT help you or your child feel better.**
- **Will NOT keep others from catching your illness.**

Unless they are immuno-compromised, adults and children fight off viral illnesses like colds and flu on their own. If

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Antibiotic Resistance

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your doctor or health care provider prescribes an antibiotic to treat a bacterial infection—like strep throat—be sure to take all of the medicine. Only using part of the prescription means that only part of the infection has been treated. Not finishing the medicine can cause resistant bacteria to develop.

Commonly Asked Questions:

How do I know if I, or my child, have a virus or a bacterial infection?

Ask your doctor or health care provider and follow his or her advice on what to do about your illness. Remember, colds are caused by viruses and should not be treated with antibiotics.

Does this mean we should never take antibiotics?

Antibiotics are very strong medicines and should be used to treat bacterial infections. Your doctor or health care provider will prescribe antibiotics if you have a bacterial infection.

When are antibiotics necessary for children?

Your child's doctor can best answer this complicated question and the answer depends on the diagnosis. Here are a few examples:

- Ear infections: There are several types; many need antibiotics, but some do not.
- Sinus infections: Most children with thick or green mucus do not have sinus infections. Antibiotics are needed for some long-lasting or severe cases.

- Cough or bronchitis: Children rarely need antibiotics for bronchitis.
- Sore throat: Viruses cause most cases. Only one major kind, "strep throat," requires antibiotics. This condition must be diagnosed by a laboratory test.
- Colds: Colds are caused by viruses and may last for two weeks or longer. Antibiotics have no effect on colds, but your doctor may have suggestions for obtaining comfort while the illness runs its course.

It is worth noting that viral infections sometimes lead to bacterial infections. But treating viral infections with antibiotics will not prevent bacterial infections and may trigger infections with resistant bacteria. Keep your doctor informed if the illness gets worse, or lasts a long time, so that the proper treatment can be given as needed.

How can I protect myself from contagious diseases?

- Always handle, prepare, and store food correctly.
- Get immunized. Ask your health care provider which immunizations you or your children should receive.
- Wash your hands thoroughly using soap and water for 10-30 seconds.

For the health of your family and others throughout the world, follow these guidelines and never pressure your doctor to give antibiotics when they're not warranted. Our future may depend on it.

Content sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—www.cdc.gov

U.S. Food and Drug Administration—www.fda.gov

Prevention Tips: Prevent the Spread of Antimicrobial Resistance

- Antimicrobial drugs intended for bacterial infections should not be taken for viral infections such as colds, coughs, or the flu.
- If your health care provider determines that you do not have a bacterial infection, ask about ways to help relieve your symptoms. Do not pressure your provider to prescribe an antibiotic.
- Take medicine exactly as your health care provider prescribes.
- Take the antibiotic until it is gone, even if you are feeling better. Do not save the medication to treat yourself or others later.

Don't Let Back Pain Get You Down

Before you reach for that snow shovel this winter, think first about protecting your back. When you do battle with Old Man Winter, or tackle any other kind of heavy lifting at home or on the job, do everything you can to reduce the chance of injury.

About 80% of the population develops back problems at some time in their lives. Back pain can range from a dull, constant ache to a sudden, sharp pain that makes it hard to move. It can start quickly if you fall or lift something too heavy, or it can get worse slowly. Discs that sit between the vertebrae of the spine can rupture or break down. Muscles can strain or tear.

A wide variety of factors can increase your risk of back problems: getting older; being out of shape or overweight; having a job that requires lifting, pushing or pulling while twisting your spine; having poor posture; smoking; and having a disease or condition that causes back pain. Race can also be a risk factor. For example, African American women are 2-3 times more likely than white women to have part of the lower spine slip out of place.

You can help prevent back pain by standing up straight and minimizing the amount of heavy lifting you do. When the snow drifts beckon, or you must lift something else that's heavy, bend your legs and keep your back straight.

Exercising and keeping your back muscles strong are among the best ways to minimize your risk of back pain. Maintain a healthy weight or shed some pounds if you weigh too much. And maintain strong bones by making sure to get enough calcium and vitamin D every day.

Signs That You Need to See a Doctor for Back Pain

Numbness or tingling

Severe pain that doesn't improve with rest

Pain after a fall or an injury

Pain plus any of these problems:

- trouble urinating
- weakness
- numbness in your legs
- fever

Weight loss when you're not on a diet

If you do experience back pain, treatment depends on what kind of pain it is.

Acute or short-term low back pain generally lasts from a few days to a few weeks.

Most acute back pain is the result of trauma to the lower back or a disorder such as arthritis. Pain from trauma may be caused by a sports injury, work around the house

or in the garden, or a sudden jolt such as a car accident or other stress on spinal bones and tissues.

Symptoms may range from muscle ache to shooting or stabbing pain, limited flexibility and range of motion, or an inability to stand straight.

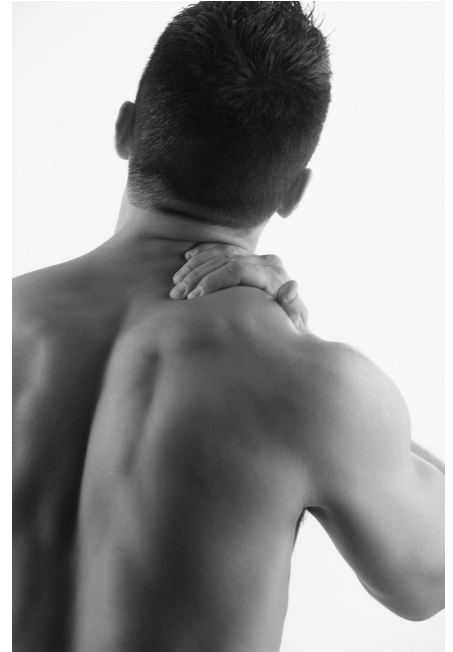
Chronic pain, which lasts for more than 3 months, is much less common. It is often progressive and the cause can be difficult to determine. Hot or cold packs may bring temporary relief but don't fix the cause. Behavioral changes, such as learning to lift properly and exercising more, can help in the long term, as can getting more sleep, improving your diet and quitting smoking.

Back pain can also be a sign of many other medical conditions, including arthritis, pregnancy, kidney stones, infections, tumors and stress. That's why it's a good idea to see a doctor if your pain is particularly bad or lasts for more than a few days.

Is there any treatment?

Most low back pain can be treated without surgery. Treatment involves using over-the-counter pain relievers to reduce discomfort and anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce inflammation. The goal of treatment is to restore proper function and strength to the back, and prevent recurrence of the injury. Medications are often used to treat acute and chronic low back pain. Effective pain relief may involve a combination of prescription drugs and over-the-counter remedies. Although the use of cold and hot compresses

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has never been scientifically proven to quickly resolve low back injury, compresses may help reduce pain and inflammation and allow greater mobility for some individuals.

Your doctor might also suggest you try complementary and alternative medical treatments, such as manipulation of the spine, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (mild electrical pulses), acupuncture (thin needles used for pain relief) and acupressure (pressure applied to certain places in the body).

Individuals should resume activities as soon as possible. Bed rest is recommended for only 1–2 days at most. Exercise may be the most effective way to speed recovery from low back pain and help strengthen back and abdominal muscles. In the most serious cases, when the condition does not respond to other therapies, surgery may relieve pain caused by back problems or serious musculoskeletal injuries.

What is the prognosis?

Most patients with back pain recover without residual functional loss, but individuals should contact a doctor if there is not a noticeable reduction in pain and inflammation after 72 hours of self-care. Recurring back pain resulting from improper body mechanics or other nontraumatic causes is often preventable. Engaging in exercises that don't jolt or strain the back, maintaining correct posture, and lifting objects properly can help prevent injuries.

Many work-related injuries are caused or aggravated by stressors such as heavy lifting, vibration, repetitive motion, and awkward posture. Applying ergonomic principles — designing furniture and tools to protect the body from injury — at home and in the workplace can greatly reduce the risk of back injury and help maintain a healthy back.

What research is being done?

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and other institutes of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) conduct pain research in laboratories at the NIH and also support pain research through grants to major medical institutions across the country. Currently, researchers are examining the use of different drugs to effectively treat back pain, in particular, chronic pain that has lasted at least 6 months.

Other studies are comparing different health care approaches to the management of acute low back pain (standard care versus chiropractic, acupuncture, or massage therapy). These studies are measuring symptom relief, restoration of function, and patient satisfaction. Other research is comparing standard surgical treatments to the most commonly used standard nonsurgical treatments to measure changes in health-related quality of life among patients suffering from spinal stenosis.

Quick tips to a healthier back

Following any period of prolonged inactivity, begin a program of regular low-impact exercises. Speed walking, swimming, or stationary bike riding 30 minutes a day can increase muscle strength and flexibility. Yoga can also help stretch and strengthen muscles and improve posture.

Ask your physician or orthopedist for a list of low-impact exercises appropriate for your age.

- Always stretch before exercise or other strenuous physical activity.
- Don't slouch when standing or sitting. When standing, keep your weight balanced on your feet. Your back supports weight most easily when curvature is reduced.
- At home or work, make sure your work surface is at a comfortable height for you.
- Sit in a chair with good lumbar support and proper position and height for the task. Keep your shoulders back. Switch sitting positions often and periodically walk around the office or gently stretch muscles to relieve tension. A pillow or rolled-up towel placed behind the small of your back can provide some lumbar support.
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
- Sleep on your side to reduce any curve in your spine. Always sleep on a firm surface.
- Don't try to lift objects too heavy for you. Lift with your knees, pull in your stomach muscles, and keep your head down and in line with your straight back. Keep the object close to your body. Do not twist when lifting.
- Maintain proper nutrition and diet to reduce and prevent excessive weight, especially weight around the waistline that taxes lower back muscles. A diet with sufficient daily intake of calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D helps to promote new bone growth.
- If you smoke, quit. Smoking reduces blood flow to the lower spine and causes the spinal discs to degenerate.

For more information on neurological disorders or research programs funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, contact the Institute's Brain Resources and Information Network (BRAIN) at: www.ninds.nih.gov.

Painkillers May Weaken Immunizations

Do you reach for a painkiller when you get a flu shot? That may not be such a good idea, according to researchers at the University of Rochester.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) — such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen — can react with your body's immune system and weaken the effect of flu shots and other vaccinations.

Scientists suggest it might be better to tough it out and stay away from NSAIDs a day or so before and after getting vaccinated.



Active Video Games

According to the Center for the Advancement of Health at the University of Texas at Austin, children who play video games are more likely to be overweight compared to children who watch television. "Video game play — but not television use — is indeed displacing the time children spend in more physically demanding pursuits," explained Elizabeth Vanderwater, one of the researchers.

But some video game makers are hoping to change that trend by introducing games that require participants to box, kick, and swing, depending on the scenario. The activity is enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat.

For a real workout, try Dance Revolution, in which players jump on a dance mat and hit buttons to the music. "Kids playing this game can burn as many calories as if they were strenuously exercising," says Lorraine Lanningham-Foster, an obesity researcher.

Testing Cholesterol

Most of us know it's important to have our cholesterol tested because high levels can lead to heart attacks and strokes. But how often?

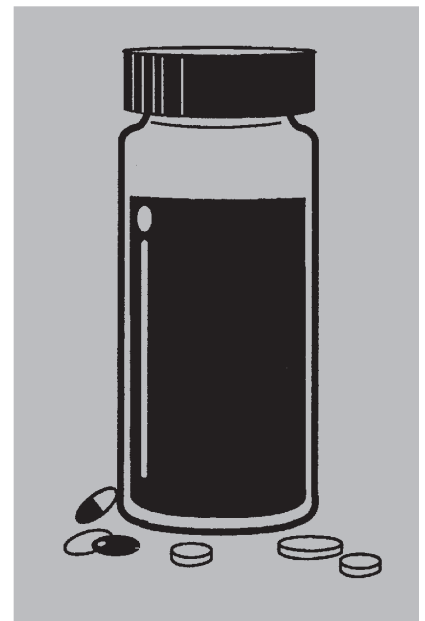
According to the Mayo Clinic, adults should have their cholesterol measured every five years, starting at age 20, with more frequent tests if levels are high.

Earlier testing is recommended, even for children, if they have a strong family history of heart disease.

How to Spot Fake Prescription Drugs

The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy estimates that 1 to 2 percent of the drugs in North America are counterfeit and warns that the practice is on the rise. It offers these safeguards:

- Don't buy prescription drugs online unless it's through the website of a legitimate pharmacy.
- Examine your medicine closely. Look for runny coloring or shoddy logos on pills.
- Watch for changes in appearance, taste, or efficacy in the medicines you take.
- Bring any medication that you suspect is counterfeit to your pharmacist or doctor right away.



Reducing Pedestrian Accidents

According to a report by the American Journal of Public Health, pedestrian fatalities quadruple during the period just after Daylight Saving Time ends (this year it's Nov. 4).

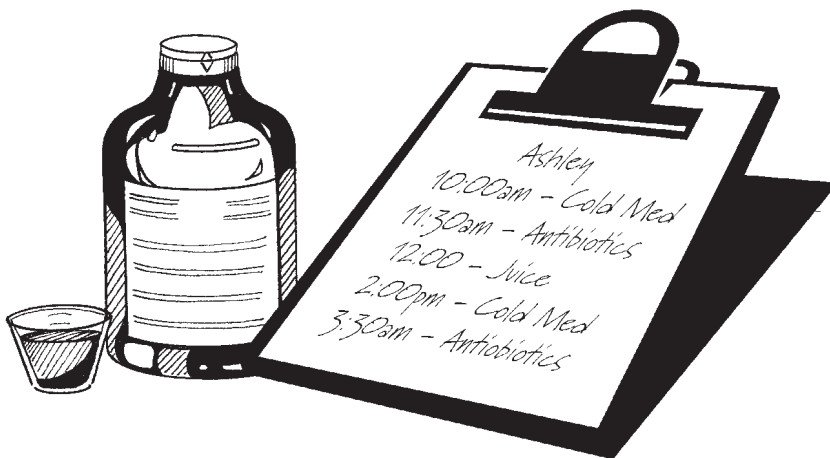
Safety experts remind drivers to turn on their headlights at dusk, slow down, and keep an eye out for pedestrians.

Avoiding Accidental Overdoses

Dr. Amy Anzilotti, a pediatrician, reminds parents of infants and toddlers to check with their pediatricians to make sure that any medication — even over-the-counter medication — is the correct treatment and is given in the correct dosage based on your child's weight and age.

"If you are in doubt, check with your pediatrician — no question is a silly one," she says, adding that it's very important to stay within the prescribed dosages. "More is not better."

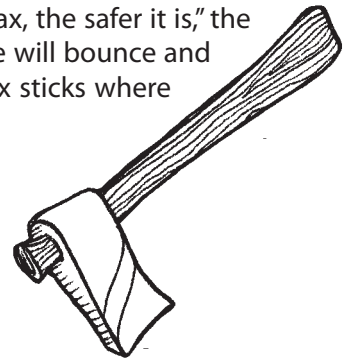
For added security, assign one parent to give the medication (and jot down the time and amount given) so that another parent or care giver doesn't accidentally give a double dose or administer a different medication that could cause a reaction.



A Sharp Ax is Safer

If fall finds you chopping wood or using an axe for other chores, the safety experts at Walter Reed Army Medical Center recommend that it be well honed.

"The sharper the hand ax, the safer it is," the center said. "A dull edge will bounce and deflect, while a sharp ax sticks where it strikes."



Navigational Systems Increase Safety

A recent study on global positioning systems (GPS) found that they increase driver safety.

Specifically, TNO Road-Vehicles Research Institute in the Netherlands found that drivers with a navigation system have 12 percent fewer insurance claims.

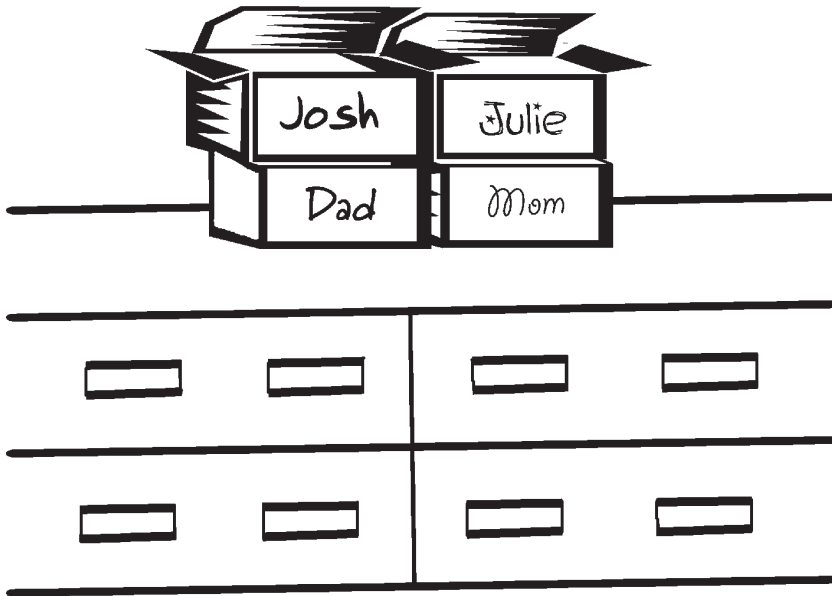
The institute chalks up the difference to driving with more confidence, as well as not having to scan a map or read directions while behind the wheel.

Creating In-Boxes at Home

Home economist Tracy Willman says the key to keeping track of family paperwork is setting up in-boxes for each member of the family.

Most office supply stores sell horizontal letter-size bins that can be labeled and stacked on top of one another. For children, these can hold things like report cards, permission slips, and teacher notes.

Before they leave the house each morning, check the box to make sure there isn't anything that requires attention. And don't forget in-boxes for spouses to hold personal mail and other important papers and articles of interest.



Cooking for Pets

After recent news of tainted pet food, many owners decided to try making homemade meals for their dogs and cats.

But before you don a chef's hat, consult with your veterinarian to make sure the recipe meets your pet's nutritional needs. "If you're going to cook for your pet, you need to formulate a diet that has all the right nutrients, plus supplements, and in all the right proportions," said Dr. Debbye Turner, a veterinarian, who added that it's not safe to trust online petfood recipes.

She pointed out that dogs need 38 nutrients daily in the form of carbohydrates, fats, fiber, vitamins and minerals; cats need 40 through a high protein diet with animal fat and an amino acid called taurine, which is only found in meat.

Animal experts emphasize that dogs and cats require meat in their diets for optimum health.

Lessening Test Anxiety

Dr. Mary Ann Smialek, author of *Don't Miss the Bus!*, offers these suggestions on how parents can help their children overcome test anxiety:

- In the week before the test, schedule short study sessions to review the test material. This will be more effective than one long cram session the night before.
- Set an early bedtime. A good night's sleep before a test is essential.
- Prepare a good breakfast. If your child doesn't like to eat before school, pack a nutritious snack to be eaten on the bus or in homeroom before the test.
- Be careful of what you say. Rather than "I expect you to get an A+," or "I know you'll get 100 percent," say, "Do your best."

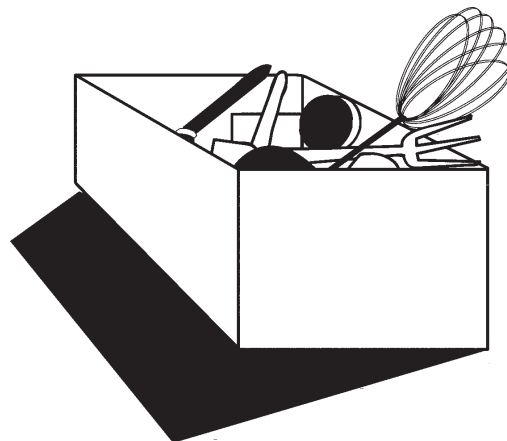
Organizing Kitchen Drawers

If your kitchen drawers are a mishmash of utensils, so full it's difficult to open and shut them, take this tip from professional organizer Peter Walsh: Remove everything from one drawer

and put the contents in a box on the counter.

Over the course of a month, as you use items from the box, return them to the drawer.

At the end of the month, give away or toss whatever is left in the box.



Securing Your Passwords

Unfortunately, the easiest computer passwords to remember are also the easiest for hackers to decipher.



Here's a simple method for creating a memorable and more secure password.

1. Think of a phrase or sentence you can remember.
Example: "I spent my honeymoon in Hawaii."
Create a new password by using the first letter of each word: "ismh1h."
2. Substitute some special characters that look like letters.
Example: Use 1 for the letters l or L; or @ for the letter A; 3 for the letter E; or * for any letter.
Your password might then read "1sm*1h."

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