

Antibiotics

Antibiotics eliminate or prevent bacterial growth and can therefore cure diseases caused by bacterial infection. They cannot however treat viral infection such as common cold or non-bacterial inflammation. Different antibiotics work effectively on different bacteria. Indiscriminate use of antibiotics should be avoided and the specific antibiotics should be identified for a particular disease. Antibiotics can only be sold on doctor's prescription in registered dispensaries.

Commonly used antibiotics include the following five types:

1. Penicillin and its derivatives
2. Tetracycline
3. Cephalosporins
4. Aminoglycosides
5. Chloramphenicol. This type of antibiotics is often used for manufacturing products for external use, such as eye drops and eye ointments.

Advice on Medication

1. Antibiotics are available in the form of pills, capsules and liquids. Capsules are to be swallowed in whole. The liquid form facilitates the consumption by children and has to shake well before use.
2. Antibiotics should generally be taken before meals for better absorption.
3. Antibiotics have to be taken according to doctor's instructions until the whole course is completed. Patients should not stop the medication indiscriminately even when their conditions improve. Otherwise, bacteria in the body cannot be eradicated or antibiotics resistance may be developed, and the latter would render the same antibiotics ineffective in curing the same disease in the future.
4. Antibiotics should be taken in accordance with the prescribed dosage and intervals until the whole course is completed. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible unless it is almost time for the next scheduled dose. In that case, skip the missed dose and take the next dose as directed. Do not take double doses.
5. Do not increase or decrease the dosage of antibiotics arbitrarily, as this may affect efficacy or lead to poisoning.
6. Do not let others take the medicines prescribed specifically for you, as similar symptoms do not represent the same disease and physical conditions vary among

individuals. Indiscriminate medication will not only delay treatment but also bring about undesirable side effects and health hazards.

7. Some patients may develop allergic reactions such as rash, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation and headache after medication. In such cases, the patient should stop medication and consult their doctor. If these effects aggravate or there are doubts over the symptoms, the patient should bring the drugs to an accident and emergency department for urgent consultation.

Life Adaptations

1. You are not required to take a restricted diet during medication. In order to help your body fight the bacterial infection, you should ensure plenty of rest and take nutritious and easily digestible food.
2. Pregnant or breastfeeding women should pay special attention as some antibiotics may affect the foetus or the infant. Seek medical advice if in doubt.

Storage of the Drugs

The drugs should be kept in a cool and dry place. Generally, they do not need to be refrigerated unless otherwise stated in the drug labels. Also, they should be stored properly to avoid accidents of mistaken consumption by children.