Overuse Of Antibiotics Is Causing One Of The Nation's Most Pressing And Growing Health Problems

Four Essential Tips To Safeguard Your Health

(NAPSA)—If you've taken antibiotics to treat a respiratory illness, such as sinusitis or bronchitis, then you know how valuable they are in making you feel better. Antibiotics are an important medicine and effective in treating certain types of bacterial infections.

However, taking them when they are not needed may lead to a serious health issue called "antibiotic resistance"—meaning the same medicine may not work for you the next time you need it to. Widespread overuse of antibiotics has fueled a growing increase in resistance and contributed to what has become one of the nation's most pressing health problems.

Resistance on the Rise

According to the Centers for Disease Control, resistance levels of bacteria have increased annually, making it harder for many types of antibiotics to be effective when needed. In the U.S., about 2 million people acquire bacterial infections in U.S. hospitals each year, and 90,000 die as a result. Approximately 70 percent of those infections are resistant to at least one antibiotic. While resistance is a national health issue, many regions in the United States experience significantly higher resistance rates than others.

"Antibiotics are critical to maintaining our health and well-being, but it's essential for people to understand when they are required and when they are not, so that these vital medicines work when we need them to," says Dr. Robert Siegel of the James J. Peters VA Medical Center and associate professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

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Essential Tips to Safeguard Your Health

Dr. Siegel shares four essential tips to safeguard your health and preserve the benefits of antibiotic use:

• Don't pressure your doctor to prescribe antibiotics to treat a cold or flu, which are caused by viruses, not bacteria. Taking antibiotics when you have a virus may do more harm than good.

• Although some prescription antibiotics may be available at little or no cost, if you don't have a bacterial infection or the medicine is not right for you, you may put your health at risk. Only use antibiotics that your doctor prescribes for you.

• If your doctor does prescribe an antibiotic, never skip doses, store for later use or share with friends or family members.

• Only your doctor will know if you need an antibiotic and what antibiotic is right for your illness. For more information, talk with your doctor or visit www.PriCara.com.