Antibiotics are medicines that can kill bacteria and help fight infections caused by those bacteria. They do not work on the viruses, including those that cause illnesses like the common cold and flu.

Some bacteria develop resistance to certain antibiotics. When this happens, doctors have to use different antibiotics to treat them. Resistant bacteria are usually identified by a test called “a culture” that checks to see what antibiotics fight that bacteria. A culture result will take 2 days and in some cases longer to confirm what bacteria is present and which antibiotics will be most appropriate.

People who are frequently in the hospital and exposed to antibiotics or others who have taken frequent antibiotics are at risk of developing an infection with a resistant bacteria.

Did you know?
It is estimated that up to 50%-75% of antibiotic prescriptions are not needed.

What are antibiotics?
Antibiotics are medicines that can kill bacteria and help fight infections caused by those bacteria. They do not work on the viruses, including those that cause illnesses like the common cold and flu.

What are resistant bacteria?
- Resistant bacteria are bacteria that have developed a defense against traditional antibiotics and can no longer be stopped by these antibiotics.
- Using too many antibiotics can increase your risk of resistant bacteria.
- There are few antibiotics that can fight resistant bacteria.
- Sometimes resistant bacteria are so strong there are no antibiotics that can fight them.

I was taking one antibiotic, but my doctor changed it to another. Why?
Some bacteria develop resistance to certain antibiotics. When this happens, doctors have to use different antibiotics to treat them. Resistant bacteria are usually identified by a test called “a culture” that checks to see what antibiotics fight that bacteria. A culture result will take 2 days and in some cases longer to confirm what bacteria is present and which antibiotics will be most appropriate.

Who is at risk for resistant bacteria?
People who are frequently in the hospital and exposed to antibiotics or others who have taken frequent antibiotics are at risk of developing an infection with a resistant bacteria.
Can antibiotics be used to treat a cold?

No, colds are usually caused by viruses which are not affected by antibiotics and increase your risk of resistant bacteria.

What are the side effects of antibiotics?

- Most of the side effects associated with antibiotics are mild but some can be severe,
- Side effects are different for each antibiotic, but here are some common side effects: rash, nausea, diarrhea, and abdominal cramping.
- Some people can have severe allergic reactions to antibiotics that can be life threatening.
- Antibiotics can also interfere with how well your other medications work.

Are there any other safer treatment options?

Some people do not need antibiotics when they have an infection. This is something to discuss with your doctor at the time of the infection.